ASPECTS OF CYCLIC MYTH
IN
CHINESE AND WESTERN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a comparative study of the history and literary form of the cyclic myth in Chinese and Western European culture. The cyclic myth is seen as a complex of discrete myths and rituals which tend to identify man with the periodic regeneration of nature and celestial bodies in order to ensure personal duration against the flux of time. By comparing the origins and transformations of the cyclic myth in both cultures the essential distinctions between Chinese and Western literature will be revealed as both cosmological and ontological.

In order to bring the Chinese cyclic myth into a coherent perspective, efforts are devoted to the reconstruction and analysis of fifteen Chinese myths which concern temporal consciousness. The original cyclic myth is then traced through increasing levels of abstraction: ritual, natural religion, and finally philosophical speculation, for each has been incorporated within the cyclic mentality of the homogeneous Chinese culture.

With the abstraction of the cyclic myth broadly defined, the paper turns to a historical study of the presentation and function of archetypal cyclic images and patterns in Chinese literature, relating these insights to the Chinese world-view. A subsequent survey of the survival of the cyclic myth in Western literature, despite the dominant eschatology of Christianity, serves as the focus of comparison between East and West. By a general delineation of the cyclic myth's transmutation in Judaeo-Christian culture, the paper proposes a better discernment of the cyclic schema as an informing structure of literary works or an index of culture, and a further understanding of the cyclic myth as a whole.
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My greatest debt is recorded in the dedication.
INTRODUCTION
Whether the study of comparative literature is regarded as "the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression" or as "the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country,"1 a student comparing the literatures of China and Western Europe is inevitably doomed to a solitude of uncertainty. The abysmal remoteness of the two cultures through history tends to magnify any perceived correspondence to the point of assured conclusions where only rough similarities may, in fact, exist. In the comparison of literature with other areas of knowledge the very homogeneity of Chinese culture poses a problem. The integration of philosophy and literature, the coherence of religion and philosophy, the correlation of philosophy and politics, and the similarities of various philosophical schools, and aesthetically the coalescence of lyric verse and music, and painting and poetry: these concerns present a united front, almost a barrier to the inquisitive Western mind. In the comparison of one literature to another, the student is faced with deciding which Chinese literature is the area of concern. Thus the May-Fourth Movement, a political protest which eventually became a cultural reformation in 1919, demarcates an integral traditional literature with an independent evolution of more than two thousand years from a heterogeneous modern literature with an intricate and pervasive Western influence or the barrenness of ideological dogma.

In the above perspective, a comparative study of literary theme, especially that of archetypal image and pattern, that which is most fundamental and most beyond temporal and spatial barriers, is likely to be the most urgent and constructive task for the student comparing Chinese and Western literature. As the ultimate expression of psychic truth and the most primordial yet autonomous form of the human spirit, the cyclic myth
as an archetypal pattern of mythology naturally arouses one's attention. Thus the task of this paper is to trace the origins, formation, and presentation of that most pervasive mentality or schema known for ages in Chinese culture as "T'ien Jên Ho I," literally the unity of man and cosmos; and further, to engender insight into the cyclic myth as a whole by contrast and comparison to its Western counterpart. The first step is a simplification of terminology—the schema of "T'ien Jên Ho I" is hereafter to be rendered as "the Chinese cyclic myth" which immediately suggests the common importance of cyclicity to both cultures while allowing for more inclusive application in the relevant areas of study.

Indeed, the uniqueness of the independence of Chinese literature and its remoteness to Western assumptions offers an opportunity to put the European-oriented New Criticism to a double test. And Arthur E. Kunst's conclusion on the ultimate object of the comparative study of Asian and European literatures as "the creation of a truly comprehensive theory of literature...based on a knowledge of independently evolved imaginative traditions" serves as the best starting point of this paper. While such an ambitious scope is yet beyond realistic expectation at this time, our comparison will hopefully reveal areas of further study as well as illuminate a concept central to both literatures.

Despite a labyrinth of various interpretations, most scholars would agree with Mircea Eliade that myth is a "complex system of coherent affirmation about the ultimate reality of things," a system which constitutes a metaphysical validation of human existence, or a primitive ontology that asserts an intimate relationship between man and the cosmos. In its sociopoetic aspect, myth is a dramatization and a rationalization of the fundamental needs of the society. Here Malinowski's definition of myth as
"a narrative resurrection of a primeval reality, told in satisfaction of deep religious wants, moral cravings, social submissions, assertions, even practical requirements" serves as the best description of its vital function in primitive society. Finally in its psychopoeic aspect we turn to the pioneering work of Carl Jung where "myths are original revelations of the preconscious psyche, involuntary statements about unconscious psychic happenings." Here myth is an expression of instinctual drives, repressed wishes, fears and conflicts, and remnants of the collective unconscious. Whether in its mensopoeic, sociopoeic, or psychopoeic aspects, (and all are involved in apprehending the cyclic myth), myth is the original touchstone of culture. We will maintain that myth circumscribes a verbal universe in which man's psychological, social, religious, and philosophical lives are really one in the juxtaposition and succession of the stage of gods, heroes, and man.

In the last analysis, with functional similarity in regard to soothing the psyche, stabilizing the society, and promoting cultural continuity, we will not enter into the controversy surrounding the primacy of myth or ritual. Although myth connotes a way of envisaging, and ritual, as a temporal sequence of acts, denotes a way of doing, their functional relation is both inevitable and interdependent. Lillian Feder best renders this mutual dependence as: "myth clarified the prescribed action of rites, and rites enacted mythical narrative in stylized dramatic form." We would thus agree with Northrop Frye that myth should be understood as "the central informing power that gives archetypal significance to the ritual," while a ritual may in turn suggest the origin of the narrative of myth.

Aside from ritual, myth tends to reveal a body of metaphysical thought whose development may be consequent to the original myth. This process was
suggested by Susanne Langer—"When the mythical mode is exhausted, natural
religion is superseded by a discursive and more literal form of thought,
namely philosophy," and amplified by Frye to include literature "which
inherits the fictional and metaphorical patterns that identify aspects of
human personality with the natural environment." In a sense, then, both
philosophy and literature merge inseparably with myth while literature es-
pecially inherits plots and characters, and themes and images which are
complications (in Frye's terms, "displacements") of similar elements in
myth. It is this universalizing tendency of myth which justifies the
mythopoeic subject of this study: to investigate the origins of the
narrative of the cyclic myth in rituals, to expound the abstraction of the
cyclic mentality in philosophy, and to study the presentation and function
of the archetypal cyclic mythos in literature.

To begin with a brief account of the origins and functions of the
cyclic myth is to concern ourselves with the disparity between human and
cosmic time. Time is the essential experience of human existence. It
is usually comprehended as a linear progression of succession which is
never experienced as a whole, for as soon as the future becomes the present,
the present becomes the past. While the fact that things exist through time
demands a second concept, that of permanence or duration. As an adequate
description of time, duration must be understood as arising from the suc-
cessive flux of time, yet conversely, only within the background of duration
is the emergence and the human awareness of succession possible. Without
duration, time is the mere succession of heterogeneous present moments;
while without succession, duration is but an all-inclusive and unchanging
present. Duration then becomes the sustaining quality of time and the
actual 'co-existence' of past, present, and future. The concept of duration
has important ramifications for consciousness, for the individual as a self-centred form of life must endure by opposing its permanency to its transitoriness in time. And the highest state of consciousness, whether transcendental or mythical, is the awareness of the 'co-existence' of past, present, and future, or the experience of time as a whole.

As one of the most vital archetypes of human consciousness, the cyclic myth is inevitably temporally centred. It is a myth of eternal return, the myth of periodic becoming and perpetual regeneration. Its themes represent man's envisaging and manipulating of the unfathomable cosmic setting of his existence, especially the awful consciousness of his biologically irreversible death against the rebirth of the sun, moon, and the seasons. This linear consciousness of the self against nature would remain an imponderable nightmare were it not for man's mythmaking imagination which recognizes in nature the permanent symbol and divine rule, and assimilates himself to it to define his life and being. In essence, the cyclic myth identifies man with the periodic becoming and regeneration in nature, and guarantees personal duration against the flux of time.

In the mythopoeic perspective, nature is cyclical; there is everywhere a concept of the end and beginning of a temporal period, and there are always instant repetitions or images and obvious metaphors ready to convey a dawning concept of being. In heavenly motion, solar alternation, lunar regularity, and seasonal rotation, there appears a pattern of cyclic significance which offers an optimistic view of life in general. Northrop Frye best summarizes this as: "myth seizes on the fundamental element of design offered by nature— the cyclic, as we have it daily in the sun and yearly in the seasons— and assimilates it to the human cycle of life, death and re-birth".10
Above all the identity of human and natural cycle presents a conviction of the periodic regeneration of time which in turn is a revolt against the historical or linear time of succession. Here we rely greatly on the researches of Mircea Eliade, especially his *Cosmos and History*. According to Eliade, the cyclic ontology makes the abolition of historical linear time possible through a reduction of events to categories, individuals to archetypes, space to the "centre", and time to the original time of creation. Then, through the repetition of meaningful paradigmatic acts or archetypal gestures, the linear time of succession is suspended as man participates in the time of pure duration, the mythical time of infinite perpetuity.  

In this regard the cyclic myth can be seen as an identification of man with the cyclical structure of nature from which he derives a cyclic notion of time that makes his life meaningful and his being harmonious with the cosmic setting of incessant regeneration which surrounds him.

In literature the cyclic myth is most evident in thematic structure and symbolism which depicts the cyclic cosmogony within which the action of the work occurs, and in the pattern of plot usually described as the cyclic "quest of the hero". This latter pattern has been a frequent subject of literary theorists, receiving its broadest treatment in Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, but is also ably represented in Robert Harrison's essay, "Symbolism of the Cyclical Myth in 'Endymion'."  

The following study is naturally indebted to the work of Northrop Frye and Mircea Eliade who, despite the limited inclusiveness of their theories, have provided the framework for studying the relationship between myth and literature. In the following pages we will trace the formation of the cyclic mentality in archaic Chinese mythology by investigating its narrative origin in the dramatic enactments of natural religion in totemism,
manaism, and ancestral worship, in the Chinese rituals of sacrifices to Heaven, Earth, and the cosmic mountain, and in the institutions of monthly observances and the Hall of Light. Next we will analyze in the major schools of Chinese philosophy, the possible evolution of its ontological assertion of the unity or harmony of man and the cosmos, before surveying the presentation and function of the cyclic myth in Chinese literature. Finally, within a brief survey of Western European literature we will demonstrate the assimilation of the cyclic myth by the eschatological concerns of Christianity and its subsequent influence on that literature.
Footnotes to Introduction


5. Carl Jung. Cited by Feder, ibid., p. 50

6. Feder, ibid., p. 5.


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II

THE CONSTRUCTION OF

THE CHINESE CYCLIC MYTH
A. The Temporal Envisagement in Chinese Mythology

Perhaps more so in China than in any other culture of comparable antiquity, myth circumscribes a universe in which man's psychological, philosophical, religious, social, and even political histories are centripetally anchored in abstractions of cyclic renewal. Using the time honoured principles of divide and conquer we must trace three great roots of ancient Chinese culture—mythology, ritual, and philosophy, to discern their final blossoming into a cyclic myth which was (and is) one of the foundations of Chinese life. The tree is immense, the branches manifold, and the roots often fragmented by the sheer weight of history. Obviously much pruning will be necessary, not so much as to obscure the shape through modern critical fashions but to reveal the true outlines as revealed in Chinese culture.

Any study of the earliest Chinese myths must acknowledge the insufficiencies of source documents. To minimize the vagaries of three thousand years of natural upheaval is to maximize the human factor which in the case of the infamous Burning of the Books of 220 B.C. was equally disastrous. Ignoring the more fantastic events of history, one still must deal with the well-meaning distortions of euhemerizing humanists, rationalising naturalists, and fanatic religious sectarians. Fortunately for our purposes we are more concerned with the sustained influence of the overall fragmentary corpus, and the reappearance of earlier ideas in later irrefutable documents tends to confirm the accuracy of original models. Much remains to be done in reconstructing early Chinese mythology, and some of the problems may find solutions in future archaeological discoveries.¹

To discover the origins of the Chinese cyclic myth is to reveal the existential situation of most primitive peoples. To briefly restate
the general formation of the cyclic myth, in the world there is everywhere a revelation of recurrent rhythm—the periodic alternation of tide, of night and day, of the moon's wax and wane, and of the seasons. Against this cosmic rhythm is placed the undeniable linearity of human consciousness. To alleviate the intolerable tensions of this disparity "myth seizes on the fundamental element of design offered by nature—the cycle, as we have it daily in the sun and yearly in the seasons—and assimilates it to the human cycle of life, death, and (analogy again) rebirth". From the periodicity of nature primitive man derives a cyclical notion of time subsumed in a cyclic mythology. It is through this premise that we trace the temporal sense as an essential experience of human existence through Chinese myth to its eventual dramatization in the Myth of Divine Administration.

Only by emphasizing the process through which man reveals the tensions which compelled the formation of the original myth can we adequately explain the time-sense of early Chinese mythology. What later becomes the developed cosmogonic cyclic myth which underlies Chinese culture was once fragmented into separate myths of creation, rebellion, and reconciliation. The cyclic myth may be seen as the developed response to the tension which these earlier myths portrayed.

Chinese mythology in one aspect is the continuous story of maturing temporal awareness—the harmony of time and its frustrations, the ripeness of time, and the urge toward rebellion against or reconciliation with time. In the Chinese myth of creation the cosmic cycles are but universal courses necessary for the great harmony. Light and darkness, seasons, and tides were no cause for concern for the earliest men in myth for they were still in some sense, divine; that is although separated by P'an Ku, heaven and
earth remained in communication, and divine and mortal beings mingled freely. The divine and human worlds further coincided through cosmic mountains and cosmic trees which joined heaven and earth. There was no conscious differentiation between god, man, and nature. Mankind enjoyed the paradisial rewards of a thousand-year lifespan which could be extended by partaking of sacred fruits and the waters along the pathways to heaven. Existence, in a word, was eternal and it was not until the estrangement of earth from heaven that temporal tensions arose.\(^3\)

In *A Classification of Shang and Chou Myths*, Chang Kuang-chih suggests that the accessibility of the world of god to the world of man was taken for granted throughout the Shang (1766-1123 B.C.) and the Chou (1122-249 B.C.) periods; but in later periods in some traditional versions the communication between the two worlds was completely severed.\(^4\) In fact, the Myth of Estrangement of Earth from Heaven had early appeared in *The Book of Documents*, supposedly compiled in the Spring and Autumn period (722-481 B.C.) and was at once available in several important classics of the period such as *Remarks Concerning the States*, *The Bamboo Books*, and *The Mountain-Sea Classic*.\(^5\)

The temporal harmony enjoyed by the man-gods during the Golden Age was soon shattered by the Myth of the Rebellion of Ch'ih Yu. Immediately evident are the parallels between the causes and effects of Ch'ih Yu's rebellion and the Christian myths of Satan's fall and Eve's disobedience. Although both descents are based on the sin of pride, the separation of the worldly from the divine is more pronounced in the Christian view, and less humanly directed in the Chinese version. Thus the Titan, Ch'ih Yu, is descended from Yen-Ti, one of the Sun-Gods, and possesses the fantastic physical attributes more typical of the divine
than the profane. We must agree with T'ang Chün-i that one of the characteristics of Chinese culture is the absence of an abyssal differentiation between human and divine beings, and this in time furthers the emerging concept of the continuing (though diminished) unity of Heaven and man. The Chinese myths support Eliade's theory that primitive peoples regard the existence of man in the cosmos as a fall from a spontaneously continuous present. To this end Ch'ih Yu's rebellion resulted in the experience of time as the support and limitation of existence; it was a deprivation of immortality and a denial of eternity.

The emergence of the God of Time after the estrangement from Heaven perfectly underscores the temporal tensions of the earliest Chinese mythmakers, especially when we consider that the god's name, "I Ming," connotes "a sigh of sorrow or grief". The identity of the sun as an emblem of time was never more exact; no longer the familiar sun transformed from P'an Ku's left eye nor the gracious god of light and heat, it becomes abstracted into ten suns, each strictly regulated and travelling across the sky through various stations to indicate the periods of the day, and each strictly supervised and fulfilling through rotation the decimal system of dating.

Although there is much disagreement among Chinese scholars about the priority of the appearance of the Myth of the Ten Suns over the decimal division of time used in the Shang period (1766-1123 B.C.), all agree that the names of the ten suns and the decimal points are identical; that the myth of the rotation of the ten suns appeared no later than the Shang period; and that the myth of the simultaneous appearance of ten suns appeared no later than the end of the Spring and Autumn period (722-481 B.C.). At any rate the imaginative basis for the Myth of the Ten Suns can be seen as an increased awareness of the discontinuity of time with its fragmentation into different modes of experience ranging
from joy to sorrow. Later the appearance of the ambivalent gods of the four seasons and the Myth of Hsi Hê forms the background to the anguish of life's ephemerality in the Myth of Titan P'êng Tsu.

In *Life and Immortality in the Mind of Han China*, Yü Ying-shih notes that in the bronze inscriptions of the Western Chou period (1122-771 B.C.), pleas for longevity are the most popular inscriptions in the prayers to ancestors or Heaven. But by the Spring and Autumn period there emerged a concept of immortality which differed considerably from its traditional counterpart, and by the end of the Warring States period it had become a widespread cult. Such phrases as "retarding old age" and "becoming immortal" became pervasive literary references as well as inscriptions. The transition from desire for worldly longevity to otherworldly immortality illustrates the continuing psychic stress of the temporal sense. Throughout the early mythic literature we find references to remote countries where death does not exist, residence of the immortals, and the healing herbs and fruits of life on cosmic mountains. The time sense revealed in Chinese myth has moved full circle from paradisial enjoyment to profane disillusionment.

The records of ancient Chinese myth illustrate that the temporal anxieties of existence naturally gave rise to conflicting responses— in this case, either rebellion or reconciliation. The Myth of Titan K'ua Fu belongs to the former. His futile quest to capture the sun and thus put an end to time is a remarkable statement of man's revolt against all-consuming time. References to the God of Hades, the God of Night, the Abyss Yü as the nadir of the sun's descent, the Great Marshes of Chaos and Life, the peach Tree of Immortality suggest a diurnal interpretation of the death and rebirth of the day. Yet the gargantuan thirst of K'ua Fu is a powerful index of the bitterness of mortality inherent since the estrangement of earth from heaven. Perhaps the transformation of his
staff into a peach forest should be seen as the persistence of the will
to revolt; in other words a sensual balm to allay the disgust which
life's travellers feel toward its certain end.

Man's persistence against time even garners the sympathies and
participation of certain gods as the Myth of Hou I and the Ten Suns
illustrates. We have already stressed the importance of the temporal
sense in the original Myth of the Ten Suns over and above its usual
interpretation as a myth of natural calamity and human strength. Both
the implicit contrast between paradisial timelessness and consequent
profane time, and the suggestion that the appearance of the multiple
suns caused a lack of water, the source of life, support a temporal in-
terpretation. Hou I's angry frustration with the total domination of
the sun's (or time's) hold upon mankind evokes a destructive response
against time itself, and he is punished severely for his rebellion,
however much mankind's feeling may be with the archer-god.

Since no revolt against time (that is, eluding death) can succeed,
it follows that temporal tensions should be moderated by the desire for
reconciliation with time, a wish-fulfillment for the timeless state
which was man's before the estrangement. The Myth of the Flight to the
Moon is of this type. Mount K'un Lun presents a sacred zone,13 and its
spiral road becomes the passage from death to life, from man to divinity,
from the ephemeral to the eternal. But its accessibility is beyond mortal
ability, and Chang O's desire for reconciliation proves too strong and
results in her exile from earth. The undercurrent of futility implies
that reconciliation with time is impossible within earthly existence. Her
banishment to the moon, that archetype of otherlife, points out the
difficulty of transcending time on the profane soil of earth.

The temporal response of reconciliation is in a sense the typical
response of mythmaking, the imaginative identified with the natural; and when the cyclic myth is considered, the spirit of reconciliation is at once original with the myth. Certainly the cosmic rhythm with its characteristics of periodic becoming played an immense part in the elaboration of cyclic concepts. It provided a certain symbolic form and optimistic parallel between the solar, lunar, and seasonal cycles, and the human organic cycle. Through the intense nostalgia for the paradisial archetype and the severe urge to regenerate himself, the primitive mythmaker chose to assimilate or homogenize the human cycle of life and death to the cycle of nature and thus assign equal ontological reality to time experienced by assuming that the observed laws of nature were one with the unobserved laws of divinity.

Susanne Langer makes a similar point: "The eternal regularities of nature, the heavenly motions, the alternations of night and day on earth, the tides of the oceans, are the most obvious metaphors to convey the dawning concepts of life-functions—birth, growth, decadence, and death." And Mircea Eliade: "What is important is that man has felt the need to reproduce the cosmogony in his constructions, whatever be their nature; that this reproduction made him contemporary with the mystical moment of the beginning of the world and that he felt the need of returning to the moment, as often as possible, in order to regenerate himself."

Beginning with the myths of creation and heaven, and the consequent estrangement, we have seen the Chinese temporal sense develop through rebellion to reconciliation and finally acceptance of the natural cycle as the metaphor for the regeneration of time and man. As the basis of a worldview which has existed for three thousand years, the evolving
cyclic myth must not be seen as one myth (as in The Flight to the Moon) but as a pattern within Chinese mythography which despite its malleability controlled the development of future thought. As a pattern of mythopoesis the cyclic myth engendered a fantastic surge of abstraction. Once the resolution of temporal tensions became possible through the union of human and natural cycles, the ancient Chinese classics are testimony to the incredible systematising of correspondences to ensure the identity of man and nature. The descriptions and stories concerning gods of directions, elements, and seasons scattered through such classics as The Mountain-Sea Classic, The Monthly Observances in The Spring and Autumn Annals of Lü, The Monthly Ordinances in The Book of Rites, and in The Book Huai-Nan Tzu, are remarkable records of this tendency to rationalize a homogeneity between biological and cosmic rhythms. One of the major concerns was the abstraction of seasonal rotation into periodic regeneration by means of an identification of the gods of directions with the gods of elements and seasons. The culmination of these rationalizing labours may be seen in surviving fragments of the Myth of Divine Administration.

Through study of inscriptions on early oracle bones (circa 1300 B.C.) it is evident that concepts of the gods of direction were yet relatively undeveloped— that is, no specific divine character had been assigned to each god. By the end of the Fifth Century B.C. these gods had developed the natures of the Chinese geographic directions and the virtues of the five elements. These rudiments of the Myth of Divine Administration were further systematized as the gods of the seasons became the divine assistants of the original five gods of direction. In this manner the regenerative cycle of nature became assimilated more completely within the
sphere of human experience.

Originally thought to be a "divine comedy" of man's affiliation with natural periodicity, the Myth of Divine Administration survives only in occasional fragments in the ancient classics. Unfortunately what remains are thematic summaries rather than dramatic plots or records of mythopoeic incidents.

Etymological studies enables us to recapture much of the vitality of this major step in the development of the cyclic myth and the following chart outlines the pattern of analogy and correspondence which is central to the myth's importance.

Chuan Hsü, the Sovereign God of the North, denotes "a cautious refraining," and implies the abstention of earth after a cold dew. The Winter God's sacred animal is a black tortoise, symbol of the mysterious state whereby the earth retreats beneath the hoar frost of the north wind. Yü Ch'iang, the assistant, is the son of the Pu Chou Wind which dwells in the obscure snow-covered northwest of the universe and is always associated with death. Despite this grim aspect, the connotation of "Yü Ch'iang" is "at ease with power, in harmony with vigor, or matched with vitality". Thus Yü Ch'iang's image as the God of the North Sea or the God of Water is a fish capable of transforming itself into a gigantic phoenix which flies from the frigid north bringing the water of life for the spring. Yü Ch'iang is also called "Yüan Mêng", (denoting "origin in occult darkness or chaos"), or "Hsüan Mêng", (denoting "latent profundity and perseverance"). To summarize, Chuan Hsü and his assistant, Yü Ch'iang, connote the latent vitality of darkness and chaos, the potential for growth hidden in the deepest snows of winter.18

Through examination of the relationship between other gods and their
assistants, the connotations of archaic names, and the symbolic reasoning behind certain sacred animals, the pattern of the Myth of Divine Administration emerges.

However fragmentary the original sources, this myth embodies that tendency to abstract the human to the divine through the intermediary example of natural cycle.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIRECTION</th>
<th>COLOUR</th>
<th>SEASON</th>
<th>ELEMENT</th>
<th>CYCLIC NATURE</th>
<th>THE SOVEREIGN GOD OF DIRECTION</th>
<th>DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION OF ITS NAME</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION AND ATTRIBUTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Center</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Mid-Season</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>The Center</td>
<td>Huang Ti - The Yellow Dragon - symbol of the earth</td>
<td>-The Supremacy of the Universe -The Omnipotent Supreme Being</td>
<td>-The Supreme God of all directions, all dimensions and all spirits. -The Sovereign God of the Center, the fifth direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>Birth (or rebirth)</td>
<td>T'ai Hao - The Green Dragon - symbol of the great spirit of vigor and vitality</td>
<td>-The great or high spirit of vigor and vitality (of the rising sun of the morning, or of the east wind dissipating the winter's severe cold.)</td>
<td>-a dragon body. -The God of the virtue of wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Yen Ti - The Red Sparrow - symbol of multiplicity.</td>
<td>-The burning heat and the brilliant light (brought about by the south wind which follows grain-rain and encourages growth</td>
<td>-an ox body. -a great Sun-God. -The God of Agriculture. -The God of the Virtue of Fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>Metal (or gold)</td>
<td>Harvest</td>
<td>Shao Hao or Chin T'ien or Yuan Shen - The White Tiger - symbol of the inexorable beast of prey.</td>
<td>-The low or small spirit of vigor and vitality. -The spirit which will be dormant in the seed when the west wind brings forth sweet ripeness -The Golden sky of the autumn evening. -The God of Completion of the round sundown.</td>
<td>-a falcon body. -The God of the White Star -The God of the Sundown -The God of the Virtue of Metal or Gold.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAME</td>
<td>ATTRIBUTION</td>
<td>DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION OF ITS NAME</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hou T'u or (Chü Lung)</td>
<td>- The God of Earth</td>
<td>- The great Earth.</td>
<td>- A bull's body with a three-eyed tiger head and two dragon horns.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The God of Hades</td>
<td>- The horned dragon.</td>
<td>- Holding a cord or rope-rule to regulate the four directions of the universe.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Riding on two dragons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chü Mang or (Ch'ung)</td>
<td>- The God of Wood</td>
<td>- The bud and sprout (-symbol of life and the spring).</td>
<td>- A square face and a bird body.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The God of the Spring</td>
<td>- The repetition, multiplication and regeneracy.</td>
<td>- Holding a pair of compasses to regulate the course of the spring.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The God of Life</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Riding on two dragons.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Son of the Sovereign God of the West and brother of the God of the Autumn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chu Jung</td>
<td>- The God of Fire</td>
<td>- The persistent heat and light of fire</td>
<td>- A beast body.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The God of the Summer</td>
<td>- The climactic state of jubilant heat and light of the summer solstice which drives living things to growth.</td>
<td>- Holding a yoke or a beam to regulate the course of the summer. - Riding on two dragons.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The God of Growth</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Son of the great Sun-God, the Sovereign God of the South.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ju Shou or (Kai) or (Hung Kuang)</td>
<td>- The God of Metal or Gold. - The God of the Autumn. - The God of Harvest. - The God of Seed. - The God of Punishment</td>
<td>- The reaper of the rich roots of exuberant grass. - The collector of the beard. - The midwife for accouchment. - Completion and perfection, or necessity and destination. - The red light of the sunset.</td>
<td>- A tiger body with white hair and with snakes hanging down from each ear. - Holding a square to regulate the course of the Autumn. - Riding on two dragons. - Son of the Sovereign God of the West, brother of the God of Wood, the God of the Spring and the God of Life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yü Ch'iang or (Yüan Mêng) or (Hsüan Mêng)</td>
<td>- The God of Water</td>
<td>- The latent vitality of darkness and chaos. - The origin in the occult darkness or chaos. - At ease with power, harmony with vigor. - The latent profundity and perseverance in the fathomless darkness.</td>
<td>- A bird body with a green snake hanging down from each ear. - A pair of huge wings which cause storms. - A fish body capable of transforming into a gigantic phoenix which brings along water of life for the spring from the north. - Holding a weight to regulate the course of the winter. - Riding on two dragons. - Son of the Pu Chou Wind of the Chaos, which causes death.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The God of Wind</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The God of North Sea</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The God of the Winter</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The God of Hibernation</td>
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The hierophany of the gods of directions vividly illustrates the nascent cyclic myth: growth, completion, hibernation (abstention and latency), death, followed by the glorious rebirth. The divine administration, the division of experience into symmetrical quadrants, demonstrates an urgent will beneath the abstraction. It is an attempt under severe temporal tension to identify the dark side of death or the ephemerality of being with diurnal change, lunar cycle, and the seasonal rotation which promises life through death. It is also the hope of transcendence from a life of fleeting being to a life of eternal becoming. With the great affiliation of the gods of directions with the gods of elements and seasons, a periodic regeneration is established and a renewal of life is obtained by man as a part of nature.
Footnotes to the Temporal Envisagement in Chinese Mythology

1. To avoid textual errors inherent in the fragmentary nature of the earliest source documents, we have confined ourselves to recognized Chinese classics. Appendix I provides bibliographical data for all sources used in rendering the myths presented in Appendix III. Although seven books selected date from after 100 A.D., they are either records of legends tacit in oral tradition, or books of etymology and encyclopedia of quotations from ancient lost texts. Furthermore, we limit source fragments to those which are identifiable with traces in classics and with legendary texts believed to have existed. Appendix II provides a chronological table of various Chinese classics and institutions and their supposed origins or legendary sources.

2. Frye, Fables of Identity, p. 32.

3. The text of the myth of creation and other myths mentioned in this chapter are provided in Appendix III.


5. The Book of Documents which chiefly consists of addresses to and from the Throne, supposedly beginning with the period of the legendary Emperors Yao and Shun (circa 3000 B.C.) was first compiled in the Spring and Autumn period (722-481 B.C.) and then was destroyed during the Burning of the Books in 220 B.C. It was later restored and edited in the Western Han dynasty by K'ung An-kuo (156-74 B.C.). The Remarks Concerning the State of Ch'u was compiled circa 400 B.C. The present version of the Mountain-Sea classic was not compiled until after the beginning of the Christian era, but it contains myths and legends which had their origins in at least the Chou dynasty (1122-249 B.C.). Scholars believe that its original version was compiled in the Warring States period, circa 372 B.C. The Bamboo Books supply a condensed record of reigns and events supposedly from 2700 B.C. to 300 B.C. and was discovered in 279 A.D. in the grave of Duke Hsiang of Wei who died in 294 B.C.


7. Mircea Eliade, Cosmos and History, p. 75.


Tu suggests that an ambiguous concept of directions, seasons, and correspondent colors underlies the Mountain-Sea Classic. He further notes that the Southern Mountain Classic describes the summer moon, the Western Mountain Classic the autumn moon, the Northern Mountain Classic the winter moon, and the Eastern Mountain Classic the spring moon. With regard to directional color the south is usually red, the west white, the north black, and the east green.


16. The Spring and Autumn Annals of Lü (Lü Shih Ch'un Ch'iu) was compiled by scholars assembled and patronized by Lü Pu-wei, a Prime Minister during the Ch'in dynasty, and was published in 238 B.C. The contents of its first twelve sections (The Monthly Observances or Yüeh Ling) are descriptions of royal and baronial beliefs and practices. Its original production may be ascribed to court diviners and scribes for its ritual was an essential part of their practice, and the welfare of the state depended upon their correct interpretation of its ordinances.

The Book of Rites (Li Chi), a compilation of royal ceremonies and duties preserved by the court writers of the Chou dynasty, was lost after the Burning of the Books and was revised circa 100 B.C. The title and contents of Section IV of the book are also known as "the Yüeh Ling" and many postulate a common source for both.

Whether the "Monthly Observances" present an ideal or factual account of the ordinances of government and ritual has been a subject of debate among Chinese scholars. In either case the principles underlying these observances have been embodied in the theory and practice of kingship until almost the present day, and as such, the work is valuable within the framework of this paper.

18. CHUAN HSÜ:
   SACRED ANIMAL: Tz'u Hai, p. 3178.
   Also cf. Morohashi, op. cit., p. 291 (v. 12).
   YÜ CH'IANG: Tz'u Hai, pp. 1076, 1088, 1091.
   Also cf. Morohashi, op. cit., pp. 771 (v. 4), 517 (v. 8).
   YÜAN MENG: Tz'u Hai, pp. 284, 360.
   Also cf. Morohashi, op. cit., pp. 973 (v. 1), 130 (v. 2).
   HSÜAN MENG: Tz'u Hai, pp. 360, 1904.
   Also cf. Morohashi, op. cit., pp. 765 (v. 7), 775 (v. 7).
B. The Cyclic Myth in Chinese Ritual and Primitive Religion

Before turning to the development of the cyclic myth in Chinese ritual, we must dispense with a maze of definition, for if Western critics have debated "myth" into a labyrinth, then surely the central minotaur must be the relation between "myth" and "ritual". At the outset we must reiterate that prescribing the primacy of one or the other is not really to the point of this study; we would prefer to be descriptive rather than prescriptive, and follow Clyde Kluckholm's lead—"this relationship is not one of the primacy of either case, but that of an intricate mutual interdependence, differently structured in different cultures."¹ With respect to the cyclic myth, Chinese ritual practice has a common psychological basis, and offers a formalized statement or symbolic dramatization of the same needs.

The problem is best concluded with reference to Phillip Wheelwright: "As the primitive participates in nature, alternations of movement and rest as there may be are soon accentuated and dramatized by ritual so that the human transition may blend with that of the cosmos...Nature, in riteopoeic perspective as well as mythopoeic perspective is cyclical; it exhibits vitally periodic becoming."²

An investigation of the cyclic basis of early Chinese ritual begins with the most primitive forms of totemism, a phenomenon believed nonexistent in China by Western social scientists until several decades ago. The supposed absence of totemism in ancient China would seem to present grave problems to those theorists who believe that the "totemic-era" is an inevitable cultural period of the history of mankind. Fortunately the pioneering work of Li Chi and Huang Wên-shan has unveiled the totemistic practices of Chinese society during the Hsia dynasty (
2205-1766 B.C.) and during the Lower Paleolithic and Neolithic Ages.  

To confine ourselves to aspects of totemism in the formation of the Chinese cyclic myth, we owe much to Liu Chieh's systematic and scrupulous study, History of the Migrations of Ancient Chinese Gentes, which asserts that the lizard, among the three earliest totemic animals, and the sun and the moon were totems of the clans of the Archer-God Hou I's offspring; and that the decimal names for the ten suns and later that of their corresponding animals were also the names of various phratries in the Hsia dynasty. The original character for "lizard" is a paradoxical combination of the sun and moon which etymologically connotes the lizard's protective coloration, that is, to change as or with the sun and moon. At any rate the mana of this totem resides in the virtue of adaptation, the persistence of the sun and the moon, or the virtue of the ever rising sun and the eternally becoming moon.  

Here, in one of the earliest known Chinese totems we detect the restless urge to alleviate that temporal tension which gave rise to the myth of the Archer-God in the first place. Again the desire for harmony with cyclic nature, the nostalgia for periodic regeneration, is elucidated and emphasized.

If the most archaic classics are any indication, the ancient Chinese were extremely ritualistic, and numerous are the records of strict and intricate rituals of daily, monthly, seasonal, and yearly sacrifices. Among these the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, the four directions, and the cosmic mountain are most important either as reflections of or contributions to the evolution of the cyclic myth. But before further study what must be stressed here are the Sun and the
Moon as the images of Heaven and Earth. From time immemorial it has been believed that the sun, born in the morning in the east at the spring equinox, is the essence of Heaven which in every aspect is luminous, active, and diffusive; while the moon, born in the evening in the west at the autumn equinox, is the essence of Earth which in all aspects is nebulous, passive, and accommodating.\(^7\)

The sacrifice to Heaven and Earth is first recorded in the inscriptions on oracle bones and is called "Chiao," literally "the suburban sacrifice". As the greatest sacrifice of the year, it was offered by the emperor as the son of Heaven and the representative of Earth. The rite of Chiao is divided into two sacrifices: the Earth sacrifice must be held on the summer solstice in a southern marsh on a square mound; the sacrifice to Heaven must occur on the winter solstice on a northern hill on a round mound. While the square and round mounds are supposedly imitative of Earth and Heaven respectively, it is the temporal considerations which are most revealing of the cyclic concept.

The summer solstice was believed to be the day the moon (as the essence of Earth) was at its extreme southerly position, the point of revival of the powers of dormancy, quiescence, and abstention. The winter solstice was the day the sun was most northerly, and the point of revival of the powers of vitality, exuberance, and diffusion. Ancient custom dictated that nothing should be attempted which might hinder the solar or lunar return on these two days. Thus we read: "No fires must be lit in the southern part of the house lest the heat be over-encouraged. Doors and gates must be closed to encourage the life-force and the free flow of the seasonal influence. Men of position or rank must keep vigil and fast. They must remain secluded in their house, avoid violent exertion, abstain from music and the beautiful, avoid sexual indulgence..."\(^8\)
Strict obedience of these customs would ensure the seasonal victory of the forces of decay and darkness and preserve the vegetative cycle.

Regarding the ascendancy of the powers of growth and light during the winter solstice, the following customs were observed: "In the eleventh hour responsible officers are commanded to take care that nothing covered be thrown open, and that there should be no calling up of the masses. No dwellings should be thrown open; no digging should be done or the heat of the earth would escape, or be stirred to unseasonal activity." For the modern mind the rites of Chiao must seem incredibly naive, even foolish, but they occupy a central position in the development of the cyclic myth. Here for the first time we see that through rite correspondent to the cosmic rhythm, the emperor as the anointed superintendent of the world could ensure harmony between the human and natural worlds. The Chiao is a graphic example of the consuming desire of the early Chinese mind for periodic regeneration, and the annulment of time.

The round mound of the first rites of Chiao was the prototype of the final Altar to Heaven in Peking, and the ritual the original pattern of the emperor's role in Chinese life for succeeding centuries. The rite was last performed in 1935 under Japanese occupation and despite the use of radio broadcast, recaptures much of its original power.

Aside from the emperor's responsibility to regulate the myriads of living things along the righteous course of the universe and thereby maintain harmony between man, Heaven and Earth, the four directions received no less attention in ancient rites. According to Interpretation of Rites in the Book of Rites, sacrifices should be offered at the beginning of each season to the corresponding gods of directions and seasons to encourage the harmonious course of each season. Six jade offerings used
in these ceremonies are vivid reminders of the myth of divine administration and the cyclic basis of the rite: Pi, a round green tablet in imitation of the perfect cycle of the cosmic rhythm, was to be offered in homage to Heaven; Ts'ung, (homage to Earth), a square yellow tablet, symbolized the "great ground"; Kuei, (homage to the gods of the East and Spring) a green equilateral-triangle tablet, imitated the new growth of spring; Chang, (homage to the gods of the South and Summer), a red acute-right-angle triangle tablet, symbolized the half-death of the vitality of all summer things; Hu, (homage to the gods of the West and Autumn), a white tiger-shaped tablet, illustrated the prey of autumn's severity; and finally, Huang (homage to the gods of North and Winter), a black semi-circular tablet, symbolized the death-like state of dormancy and hibernation in winter.  

Another ancient rite, the mysterious Feng Shan Sacrifice, illustrates the importance of the moon in early Chinese ritual. It was originally a sacrifice of the emperor to Mount T'ai — the cosmic mountain upon which centred the myths of passageways to Heaven, the myths of divine secret abodes of the Supremacy of the Universe and the Supernal Mother-Goddess, and the myths of the Trees of Life in various gardens. Perhaps the mythic location and inaccessibility of Mount K'un Lun and other cosmic mountains prompted the substitution of Mount T'ai in their place. At any rate until the Sung dynasty (960-1279 A.D.) almost every emperor after enthronement would offer a thanksgiving sacrifice on the hill of Mount T'ai. As a lunar homage the sacrifice recalls the myth of Ch'ang O and her flight to the moon. But what is most important is the mythic undercurrent, that this rite is also a return to the origin, a homage to the moon through which immortality might be obtained.
To review the elaboration of the cyclic myth in these earliest Chinese rituals is to underscore the importance of temporal tensions in the creation of these rites. The most archaic sun-moon totemism may be viewed as a nostalgia for periodic regeneration; the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth and the Four Directions are attempts to harmonize human life with the cosmic rhythm of eternal return, while the thanksgiving sacrifice to the cosmic mountain typifies that desire to return to the origin, or gain immortality. As the early myths became codified and abstracted into the complex myth of divine administration, the riteopoeic aspect generated abstractions of ritual culminating in the great institution "Ming T'ang" -- the Hall of Light.

Any investigation of ancient Chinese ritual invariably leads to the institution of "Ming T'ang" -- literally the Hall of Light from which sprang China's astronomy, cosmology, religion, government, agriculture and ethics. While we have suggested the conceptual framework which gave rise to the institution, its actual origin is shrouded in conjecture. The denotation of "Ming" first suggests an astronomical origin or association for "Ming" is composed of two pictographs for the sun and the moon, and therefore indicates that which is produced by the two luminaries. Most Chinese classics suggest the origin of Ming T'ang to be no more than the thatched hut of the tribal magician-astronomer, or perhaps the secluded sanctum used by the sage-ruler for astronomical observation. Tradition assigns the building of the first Ming T'ang to Shên Nung, the first legendary ruler and the Patriarch of Agriculture, (probably the euhemerized figure of the great Sun-God of the South) in the shape of the Pa Kua, the octagonal form of astronomical changes invented by Fu Hsi, the Sovereign God of the East. Whatever its origin, it is assured that during the expansion from tribal to feudal system, the
thatched hut became first five rooms, and then in the Chou dynasty, nine halls surmounted by an upper circular story set on the square central hall.  

The sundial structure of Ming T'ang represents both the terrestrial and celestial center of the Chinese world. The upper story or astronomical observatory was accorded the name "K'un Lun" (from the cosmic mountain) while the square below was said to be symbolic of Earth in opposition to the circular Heaven above. Understood as a directional and seasonal scheme, the five or nine halls provide a clockwise progression of the monthly sacrifices from the beginning to the end of the year. Records show that "it was the duty of the ruler at each new moon to prepare himself according to various rules, by ablutions, by eating special foods varying with the seasons, by wearing the garments of the seasons, and performing various other duties required of him, to offer the monthly mimetic sacrifices". An improper sacrifice would not merely be inefficacious, but inauspicious to the point of disjoining the course of nature. Therefore the ruler, or emperor, should act in accord with the scheme of progression and "maintain it in world-wide exactitude in order to link up the ways of the three powers of Heaven, Earth, and Man, and to extend it throughout the seasons, for the three powers and the four seasons form the seven essentials, from which spring the fulfillment of the nature of things in general and which, by aiding their development and nurture, complete that which has already been ordained". In practice the emperor would progressively occupy a room facing the direction indicated by the month and perform the required cosmological, astronomical, social and agricultural rituals and ceremonies.
direction----north
season------winter
color--------black
element-------water
month--------10-November
            11-December
            12-January

direction----south
season------summer
color--------red
element------fire
month--------4-May
            5-June
            6-July

hall--------10-left division
           11-Somber Hall
           Hall of Darkness
           12-right division

requirement----black chariot
black horse
black banner
black garment
black jade ornament

direction----east
season------spring
color--------green
element------wood
month--------1-February
            2-March
            3-April

hall--------1-left division
           2-Hall of Azure-Sun
           Hall of Rising-Sun
           3-right division

requirement----green chariot
green horse
green banner
green garment
green jade ornament

direction----west
season------autumn
color--------white
element------metal
month---------7-August
            8-September
            9-October

hall--------7-left division
           8-Hall of Assembly
           Hall of Decoration
           Hall of Unification
           of Calendar
           9-right division

requirement----white chariot
white horse
white banner
white garment
white jade ornament

direction----the center
season------midsummer
color--------yellow
element------soil
month--------the day of the Saturn
            between July and August

requirement----yellow chariot
yellow horse
yellow banner
yellow garment
yellow jade ornament

direction----the center
season------midsummer
color--------yellow
element------soil
month--------the day of the Saturn
            between July and August

requirement----yellow chariot
yellow horse
yellow banner
yellow garment
yellow jade ornament
With the breakup of the feudal system of the Chou dynasty, Ming T'ang fell into decline and its functions as an administrative centre were dispersed through the empire. Yet it remained the Son of Heaven's greatest temple for the need for the nation to be linked in harmony with the realm of nature still remained, and for this purpose the ruler was still the one essential nexus. In all operations the animated world still depended upon his cooperation in the trifold union of Man, Earth, and Heaven; the Ming T'ang remained the nation's powerhouse for its effects were political and ethical which, for the ancient Chinese, were in essence religious.

The institution of Ming T'ang suggests the intense symbiosis between man and cosmos which is a hallmark of Chinese culture. William E. Soothill's explanation parallels our explanation of Ming T'ang as a crucial manifestation of the evolving cyclic myth: "This unitary and symmetrical system of celestial palaces is but a conviction of the existence of an universal law, a revelation of a cyclic concept of the universe, an awareness of the destiny or necessity of man's participation in the due course of universal harmony, and hence a manifestation of an age-old dream of manipulation over it through the sage-ruler or the emperor's knowledge of, and therefore the power over, the cosmic order with its annual cycle of months and seasons." As the basis of the Chinese calendar and cosmology, the institution of Ming T'ang played a major role in the development of tetra-symmetrical and penta-cyclical concepts so important in the evolution of Chinese philosophy—a philosophy which would in return contribute much to the design of the cyclic pattern of man in the cosmos.

The progressive anthropocentrism of Chinese ritual revealed in
the movement from the earliest totemism, through the rites of Chiao, and finally in the developed institution of Ming T'ang is intrinsically linked to increasing abstractions of natural periodicity, for only as man is in harmony with cyclic nature does he approach the divine. The temporal tensions motivating this progression are also visible in the shift from primitive ancestor-worship (as a means of communicating with divinity) to the concept of Tê as the essence of the Mandate of Heaven, a crucial development in maintaining the legitimacy of Ming T'ang.

Inscriptions on more than one hundred thousand fragments of oracle bones bear powerful testimony to the potency of ancestor worship in the Shang dynasty (1766-1123 B.C.). The vast majority of these are records of the Shang rulers' pleas, requests and consultations regarding affairs of harvest, warfare, calamity and general social welfare. What is most interesting in these invocations is the utter necessity of intercession by the great ancestors in communications with the Supreme Being, "Ti". It seems that accessibility to the divine world was virtually impossible but for the great ancestor or forerunners of the dynasty. Ancestor deification is perhaps traced to the Shang belief that death was a natural return to the origin and mysterious state of increased spiritual potency; the semi-divine dynastic founder thus dwelt "on high", in close association with the Supreme Being and was able to intercede on behalf of the consulting ruler. The people of the Shang were more inclined to synthesize the powers of the Supreme Being and the deified ancestor, rather than distinguish between them. This homogenization is confirmed by Wang Kuo-wei who concludes that "Ti" and the great ancestor were but two faces of the same identity.  

Etymological study reinforces this conclusion: the pictographic
character for "ancestor" takes the form of a phallus— , while that of "the Supreme Being" and "the sacrifices to great ancestors of the dynasty" appears as a flower with ovary— . Both characters are symbols of origin and regeneration; indeed the desire to return to the origin, to unite with the regenerative powers of the divine world may be seen as the psychological and ethical basis of ancestor worship.

With the fall of the Shang dynasty, the Supreme Being, "Ti", was soon substituted by the "Omnipotence of T'ien" of the Chou rulers. This "T'ien" of the Chou was a far less "impersonal" omnipotence and associated as the "omnigoodness" and "omnijustice" of the universe. The rationalization of the Supreme Being was in part due to the divine justification sought by the Chou rulers for their revolution. Thus the Chou claimed a "Mandate of Heaven", which favours no one but the virtuous, and appoints no eternal mandatary and promises no eternal blessing. The concept of "Tê" or virtue is central to the "personalization" of Heaven implied in the Mandate of Heaven.

"Tê" must be understood not only in the English sense of virtue, but as an expression of natural harmony—inwardly a spontaneity with this harmony, and outwardly as the sustaining constancy or the irresistible potency of the trifold unity of Heaven, Earth and Man. It was believed that Heaven would withdraw its mandate from an unworthy occupant of the throne who stood between the transmission of "virtue" between the celestial high and the people. The concept of Tê then served to undercut the transcedency of the celestial and innovate the immanent counterpoise of the terrestrial in the cosmic harmony.

Through the influence of "Tê", the Mandate of Heaven became more rational and humanistic, and finally became identified with the "collective
will" of the people upon the exile of the tyrannic King Li by the people of Chou. Through such vagaries of history the "Mandate" became less a justification of kingship and more an excuse, yet the increasing need for amelioration of temporal tensions through union with the natural cycle remained, and eventually stimulated a more cosmogonic concept of "virtue", the Tao, or the most basic stratum of Chinese philosophy.

One of the central ideas of Chinese life, Tao has been the subject of intense scrutiny by Chinese and other scholars. Granet, the French sinologist suggests that "tao" was originally a totemistic principle comparable to mana and Tu Ėr-wei has refined this concept to the identity of "tao" as the exact name and image for the impersonal power of periodic change of the moon. Both suggestions are implied in an early meaning of Tao as the way of nature or the sustaining potency of the course of nature. By the later Chou period it had become all-embracing and yet somehow transcending the ancient symbols, finally bearing a great resemblance to the Logos of Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman philosophers. It became a totalistic concept of an ideal and universal order, harmony, and perfection—an ultimate assertion of man's oneness with nature, but its philosophical elaboration is perhaps better discussed within the framework of that seminal Chinese work, the I Ching, or The Book of Changes.

It is indeed fitting to summarize the importance of the cyclic myth in early Chinese ritual and religion with a brief study of the I Ching, a work described by Richard Wilhelm as a foundation of Chinese life—"Nearly all that is greatest and most significant in three thousand years of Chinese cultural history has either taken its inspiration from this book, or has exerted an influence on the interpretation of its text."
Fortunately for our purposes, the English sinologist has the pioneering work of Legge and Wilhelm readily available and numerous secondary studies also translated into English; we may thus restrict ourselves to the influence of the cyclic myth in the formation of the I Ching.

Concerning the earliest history of the I Ching, it was perhaps at first an unorganized collection of peasant omen-texts, then during the Hsia dynasty these documents were combined with divination practices. Towards the beginning of the Chou dynasty it had assumed its present form of the Eight Trigrams and probably the permutations of the sixty-four hexagrams. Despite the impossibility of establishing an accurate chronology, we can deduce from the development of the I Ching the importance of temporal tensions and the desire for periodic regeneration so typical of the mythology of temporal awareness outlined earlier.

The efficacy of divination is a central concept in Chinese history, and one that extends into remotest antiquity. Originating in agricultural auguries, the practice of divination has always implied a communication between micro- and macrocosm, a belief in the parallelism between what is without and what is within us, that the course of one may also be meaningful for the other. While the processes of natural change are too various for immediate perception, the direction of change may be perceived through the use of sacred objects which act as the medium between human action and natural law. Since the "estrangement of earth from heaven," divination must also be seen as the desire for reconciliation between human and natural time, one essentially linear, the other cyclic.

Connections between divination practices and what would become the I Ching were established during the Shang dynasty by the codification
of their eight natural deities (heaven, earth, mountain, marsh, thunder, fire, water, and wood) into lineal configurations, the Pa Kua. Divination of Pa Kua was accomplished through the use of the tortoise-shell and the arrangement of stalks of milfoil. The tortoise is traditionally the sacred animal of the north-winter, a hibernal animal capable of seemingly occult death and rebirth, while the milfoil was regarded as a sacred plant bearing three hundred stems every thousand years and is connected with the virtue of roundness or perfection. This natural symbolism further underscores the cyclic basis of divination; in both media we can discern the importance of regeneration and cyclic renewal.

The origins of the Pa Kua are clouded by the lack of historical data. Chinese tradition attributes the invention of the eight images to Fu Hsi, the Sovereign God of the East, and the first euhemerized emperor of the third millennium B.C. Fu Hsi allegedly contemplated the forms and patterns exhibited in sky, earth, and self, and devised the eight lineal figures of three lines each to demonstrate the intelligent operations of nature and classify the qualities of the myriads of things. Fu Hsi is also credited with ordering the Pa Kua into the "Primal Arrangement" which is basically a symbolic statement of the eternal and balanced completeness within which the process of dynamic balance operates. In the Primal Arrangement is found the interconnection of element, season, and direction which typifies the abstract systemization of the Myth of Divine Administration, the Chiao sacrifice, and the institution of Ming T'ang. 23
The Primal Arrangement of Pa Kua in Pairs of Antitheses.

The roots of the *I Ching* are further grounded in natural cycle when the importance of celestial objects is considered. "I" or "Change" is written as a pictograph of a sun placed over the moon, and as in the heavens, the sun is replaced by the moon, and the moon again by the sun, so is Change always proceeding in the phenomena of nature and the experiences of society. According to Richard Wilhelm's annotated *Ta Chuan*, "Owing to changes of the sun, moon and stars, phenomena take form in the heavens. These phenomena obey definite laws. Bound up with them, shapes come into being on earth, in accordance with identical laws. Therefore the processes on earth--blossom and fruit, growth and decay--can be calculated if we know the laws of time."²⁴ The premise for such a speculation is a belief in the concept of constancy evoked by the orbit of heavenly bodies, and the relationship between the polarities of heaven and earth, sun and moon, and the yin and yang principles. Obviously these celestial phenomena have always been present and ready for abstraction. In due course, images were recognized, attributes assigned, and concepts formed. And it is generally believed that the Shang were the first to
develop the concepts of polarity between heaven and earth, masculine and feminine, and yin and yang.

The eight trigrams of Pa Kua were of course not immune to the rationalizing complexities of the early Chinese mind. The tensions which compelled the abstracting correspondences, between man, nature, and the divine in previous schemata (Ming T'ang, etc.) are also behind the evolving Pa Kua. The accretion of correspondences was historically reinforced by the fall of the House of Shang; royal diviners were exiled and forced to earn a living from divining among common citizens. To meet the various applications of "terrestrial" life, many more images and attributes were added to the Pa Kua. The following chart is offered in illustration of the increasing complexity of symbols and attributes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRIGRAM</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>IMAGE</th>
<th>ATTRIBUTE</th>
<th>TRAIT</th>
<th>DIRECTION AND SEASON</th>
<th>SYMBOLIC ANIMAL</th>
<th>PART OF BODY</th>
<th>FAMILY RELATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>屯</td>
<td>Ch'ien</td>
<td>Heaven</td>
<td>The Creative</td>
<td>Strong Firm Light</td>
<td>S Summer</td>
<td>NW</td>
<td>Dragon or Horse</td>
<td>Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☳ ☷</td>
<td>Chên</td>
<td>Thunder</td>
<td>The Arousing</td>
<td>Active Moving Arousing</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>E Spring</td>
<td>Dragon</td>
<td>Foot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☵ ☱</td>
<td>K'an</td>
<td>Water (or moon)</td>
<td>The Abysmal</td>
<td>Enveloping Dangerous Difficult</td>
<td>W Autumn</td>
<td>N Winter</td>
<td>Pig</td>
<td>Ear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☵ ☳</td>
<td>Kên</td>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>The Resting</td>
<td>Resting Stubborn Unmoving</td>
<td>NW</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Dog</td>
<td>Hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☵ ☴</td>
<td>K'un</td>
<td>Earth (or soil)</td>
<td>The Receptive</td>
<td>Yielding Weak Dark</td>
<td>N Winter</td>
<td>SW</td>
<td>Mare or OX</td>
<td>Belly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☵ ☶</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Wood (or wind)</td>
<td>The Gentle</td>
<td>Gentle Penetrating Flexible</td>
<td>SW</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Bird</td>
<td>Thigh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☴ ☲</td>
<td>Li</td>
<td>Fire (or sun)</td>
<td>The Clinging</td>
<td>Clinging Depending Beautiful</td>
<td>E Spring</td>
<td>S Summer</td>
<td>Pheasant</td>
<td>Eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☴ ☵</td>
<td>Tui</td>
<td>Lake Marsh Rain</td>
<td>The Joyous</td>
<td>Joyful Satisfied Complacent</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>W Autumn</td>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>Mouth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order for the cyclic nature of change to be intelligible in such a linear configuration, it must be pointed out that the two cardinal principles of all existence are symbolized by the trigrams, "The Creative" and "The Receptive". The two principles are united by a relation based on homogeneity: they do not combat but complement each other. The difference in level creates a potential by virtue of which movement and living expression of energy become possible. Out of this potential there stirs the creative force, Chên, symbolized by thunder. This electrical force forms centres of activation which are discharged as lightning, The Clinging, or Li. Now the movement shifts and thunder's opposite, wind, (or Sun) sets in, to be followed by rain(K'an). Then there is a new shift as the trigrams Li and K'an (formerly acting in their secondary forms as lightning and rain) now appear in their primary forms as sun and moon which in turn cause heat and cold. When the sun reaches zenith there is heat, represented by Tui, the Joyous; when the moon reaches zenith there is cold, represented by Kên, the mountain or Keeping Still. The trigram, Keeping Still, is of mysterious significance for here, in the seed, in the deep-hidden stillness, the end of everything is joined to a new beginning. We have then in the Pa Kua the roots of the first Chinese metaphysical speculation which proclaims that from Tao emerged the great primordial one; the one evolved into the two polarities of yin and yang; the two produced the four seasonal phenomena, or heavenly spheres, or phases of being; and the four in turn produced the eight trigrams which are symbols of bio-cosmic transformation. Above all it must be emphasized that the Pa Kua are not representations of things as such, but of their tendencies in movement, or processes or phases in nature corresponding with their inherent attributes; and as such, the Pa Kua, through divination, offer man communication with regenerative nature and release from temporal
limitations.

The next stage in the development of the I Ching, that of the multiplication of the eight trigrams into sixty-four hexagrams, may be seen as the culmination of the efforts of the exiled Shang diviners to universalize the Pa Kua. Certainly there is much historical evidence that the final organization is the work of King Wen, (1154-1122 B.C.) the founder of the Chou dynasty. It is generally believed that King Wen was also responsible for the arrangement of Pa Kua known as the "Sequence of Later Heaven," a "phenomenal" sequence which presents the Pa Kua in the order in which changes are experienced by man in a yearly cycle.

The Sequence of Later Heaven

The labours of King Wen (and later, his son, the Duke of Chou) in creating the sixty-four hexagrams provided a sophisticated system of relating the complexities of human behavior to the processes of change in nature. Arrangement of the hexagrams follows the pattern of natural
cycle; thus the second last hexagram, "After Completion," represents a gradual transition from ascent to standstill; while the last hexagram, "Before Completion," represents the transition from chaos to order. Its place at the end of the circular sequence points to the fact that every end contains a new beginning.

The I Ching presents a complete image of heaven and earth, a microcosm of all possible relationships for the hexagrams and lines in their movements and changes mysteriously reproduce the movements and changes of the macrocosm. Thus we read that the I Ching "contains the measure of heaven and earth; therefore it enables us to comprehend the Tao of heaven and earth and its order". 26

Crucial to any understanding of the I Ching is the concept of change. In the process of change, every component of the situation can reverse itself according to yin-yang theory and bring a new element into the situation as a whole; moreover, beyond the transformation of opposites, change is also a cycle of phenomenal complexes which are themselves connected, such as day and night, summer and winter, and life and death. The absence of change is still movement, that is, regression, not cessation of movement, for standstill and rest are also aspects of change. Above all, change fills the category of time with content, from chaos to cosmos, that is the underlying direction of man's desire to escape temporal limitation.

How does the final formulation of the I Ching during the Chou dynasty ameliorate the tensions of human ephemerality, the prime motivation behind the systematising of early Chinese myth and ritual? In the first place change reveals an organic order, for the hexagrams provide complete images of conditions and relationships existing in the world. Because
human and terrestrial nature obey the same definite laws, and these
principles are manifestations of the divine Tao, consistency returns to
human life. Secondly, implicit in the concept of change is man's position
at the centre of events. Change is neither an intangible snare nor
external fate, but an order corresponding to human nature, a guideline
from which one can "read-off" events. The cyclic nature of all movement
prevents the movement itself from dispersing beyond human understanding,
and becomes, as it were, at the service of man.

Finally, and what is perhaps most crucial, the concept of change
defines man's place and responsibility in the cosmos and removes him from
subjection to nature. According to the I Ching man is in a position to
intervene in the course of events considerably beyond his own sphere.
When, in accordance with the natural order, each thing is in its appropriate
place, harmony is established. Now each situation demands the action
proper to it, and in every situation there is a right and a wrong course of
action; thus the individual comes to share in shaping his fate, for his
actions intervene as determining factors in world events. As the centre
of events, the individual who is conscious of responsibility is on a par
with the cosmic forces of heaven and earth, and in such a manner, can
change be influenced. In the final analysis we return to Richard Wilhelm
(as we once began) to summarize the metaphysical importance of the I Ching:
"It is built on the premise that the cosmos and man...obey the same law;
that man is a microcosm and is not separated from the macrocosm by any
fixed barriers. The very same laws rule for one as for the other, and
from the one a way leads into the other. The psyche and the cosmos are
to each other like the inner world and the outer world. Therefore, man
participates by nature in all cosmic events, and is inwardly as well as
outwardly interwoven with them".27

Through its revelation of the universe as organic order and man's position of responsibility as the centre of events, the I Ching serves as both summary of an solution to the temporal tensions which were the basis of Chinese myth and ritual. As always, time is of the essence, and the response to the dreadful linearity of human consciousness in the face of natural cycle and divine immortality must be a temporal solution.

Unlike the eschatological solution of the Christians, the Chinese embraced the ever-cyclic natural world as a manifestation of the divine Tao, and through the gradual evolution of a cyclic myth regained a semblance of the divinity man once enjoyed. The earliest myths and rituals reveal the anguish of human ephemerality; and the myth of divine administration, the Chiao sacrifices, and the institution of Ming T'ang suggest the direction of the solution. It remained for the complex abstractions of the I Ching to provide an ongoing metaphysical system which would satisfy those earliest longings. Of course, the I Ching could never be the final solution, if there could ever be a "final solution" to the limitations of consciousness. Rather The Book of Changes was a plateau of speculation, offering a firm base for the philosophical machinery which would soon be brought to bear on the refinement of its central concepts. As the most exact formulation of the cyclic myth yet developed, it became the crossroads of Chinese culture and the source of inspiration for future artists and philosophers.

Before considering the next stage of the cyclic myth's development at the hands of Chinese philosophers, we offer the following chart by way of summarizing the evolution of ideas discussed thus far. Certainly any attempt to encapsulate three thousand years of Chinese culture on a
single page is doomed to ignominious defeat. Moreover our graphic history is perhaps more conceptually accurate than chronologically exact, (especially considering the fragmentary nature of the earliest Chinese works). Yet despite these limitations, a visual presentation often succeeds where pages of text cannot, and it makes immediately apparent the importance of The Book of Changes as both past summary and future basis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASED ANTIQUITY</th>
<th>GOD, ANCESTOR, HEAVEN</th>
<th>CORRESPONDENT RITE TO COSMOS</th>
<th>RITUALS AND RELIGION</th>
<th>DEFINITION &amp; PA KUA</th>
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<tr>
<td>MYTHOLOGICAL EMPIRES -</td>
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<tr>
<td>P'AN KU</td>
<td>Myth of Creation of Universe</td>
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<td>FU HSI</td>
<td>Myth of Creation of Man</td>
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<td>NU VA</td>
<td>Myth of Universal Destruction</td>
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<td>A SHEN MING</td>
<td>Myth of Paradise Rebuilt</td>
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<td>HUANG TI</td>
<td>Myth of Golden Age from Heaven</td>
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<td>(T'AI HAO)</td>
<td>Myth of Universal Rebellion</td>
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<td>(YEN TI)</td>
<td>Myth of Cod of Time</td>
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<td>(SHAO HAO)</td>
<td>Myth of Births of Ten Sun and Twelve Moons</td>
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<td>QWAN HSU</td>
<td>Myth of Flight to the Moon</td>
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<td>THIRD MILLENNIUM B.C.</td>
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<td>LEGENDARY SAGE KINGS -</td>
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<td>TAO</td>
<td>SHUN</td>
<td>TÜ</td>
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<td>2205 - 1766 B.C.</td>
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<td>BSIA DYNASTY -</td>
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<td>1766 - 1123 B.C.</td>
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<td>SHANG DYNASTY -</td>
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<td>1300 B.C. Earliest date of Oracle Bone Found</td>
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<td>1154-1122 B.C. King Wên of Chou</td>
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<td>1137 - 771 B.C.</td>
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<td>WESTERN CHOU DYNASTY</td>
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<td>771 - 279 B.C.</td>
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<td>EASTERN CHOU DYNASTY</td>
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<td>722-481 B.C.</td>
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<td>571 B.C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHINA I - EARLY PORTION OF BOOK OF CHANGES (770 B.C.)</td>
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<td>HUNDRED SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHY</td>
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<td>CONFUCIANISM - CONFUCIUS</td>
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<td>TAO AND YIN-YANG COSMOLOGY</td>
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<td>COSMOLOGY - CYCLIC, ORGANIC, HARMONIOUS</td>
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<td>CYCLIC TIME</td>
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<td>LINEAR TIME OF HISTORY AND UTOPIAN AGE</td>
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<td>CONFESSION BETWEEN MAN AND HEAVEN</td>
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<td>UNITY OF MAN AND CREATION</td>
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<td>227 B.C.</td>
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<td>CH'IN DYNASTY</td>
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<td>206 B.C.</td>
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<td>THE BURNING OF BOOKS</td>
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</table>
Footnotes to the Cyclic Myth in Chinese Ritual and Primitive Religion


5. Liu, ibid., p. 88.

Etymological Dictionary (Shuo Wen Chieh Tzu) cited by Liu, ibid., p. 53.


The dethroned emperor, Hsuan T'ung, under Japanese pressure returned to his ancestral Manchuria to found a new dynasty. A new tricentric Altar designed in imitation of the historic Peking altar was erected and the rites performed as Soothill describes: "At the winter solstice 1935, in the darkness before dawn he came in the rightful robes, following the ancient ritual, if with diminished glory, knelt under the frosty stars, facing the north; and by radio the world listened to his thin sharp voice as it rose and fell while he offered himself to the ancestors and the powers above and of nature—the Shang Ti, and cried aloud the ancient prayers for suitable seasons for his new-old people. His sacrificial pyres were scanty compared with the past, his retinue small; but some of his supporters may have hoped that through the renewed rites, the 'kingly way' might come back to earth, and potency and
virtue flow into the slight robed figure looking toward the north star, bearing himself with a pathetic dignity after the fashion of the sovereigns of a long, long past."

11. T'ao T's'ung Po and annotation by Chêng Hsuan; cited by Tu, op. cit., p. 149.

12. See Chou Li Feng Jen, Ta T'ai Li Pao Fu Chu, and Han Shu Chiao Szu Chih; cited by Tu, ibid., p. 129. Also Chiao Szu Chih; cited by Tu, ibid., pp. 129-147. Also Annotation by Shih Ku; cited by Tu, ibid., p. 129.

13. Soothill, op. cit., pp. 67-68, 87. Our discussion of Ming T'ang is almost entirely indebted to William E. Soothill's remarkably detailed investigations in The Hall of Light. One of the few pioneering works of Chinese scholarship available in English, it is indispensable for students of early Chinese history and philosophy.

14. The arrangement of the rooms has been a matter for controversy among scholars of later times, and there are various versions of the plan (all of comparatively late date) which are given below. (Also cf. Soothill, op. cit., pp. 88-89).


17. Soothill, ibid., p. 112.


23. K.A. Dhiegh's The Eleventh Wing (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1973, pp. 81-92) offers an interesting analysis of the symbolic indications contained in the Primal Arrangement. He notes that: "Man's joyous temperament (Tui) is situated in the southeast octogant wedge between Li and Ch'ien. Li is the natural element of fire. It represents light, clarity, sun, eye, perception and understanding. It is set in the east, a symbol of rising, beginning, a starting point from where there is ascendance. Above, in the south, is Ch'ien (The Originating). Ch'ien is the source of all phenomena, projective, the root of power...An inference: Man experiences the joyous state when he perceives without a doubt that he functions as a rising expression of heaven's power, and with this conviction he has merged into the will of heaven". (pp. 87-8)


25. Ibid., pp. 284-5.


C. The Cyclic Myth in Chinese Philosophy

If we accept the view that the I Ching is truly the crossroads of Chinese culture we must also admit that it is a transition, a crossroad from the age of myth and ritual to the era of rationalization and abstraction, and yet a convergence where the four main schools of Chinese philosophy (Confucianism, Taoism, the Yin-Yang School, and Buddhism) meet. Throughout history these four schools have been paralleling and reinforcing each other to the point where one can truly say that every Chinese is a Confucian in his social and active life, a Taoist in his individual and passive life, and a Taoist or Buddhist in his religious life, or a Yin-Yang believer in his superstition.

According to Eliade "the symbol, the myth, the rite, express, on different phases and through means proper to them, a complex system of coherent affirmations about the ultimate reality of things, a system that can be regarded as constituting a metaphysic". When the mythic mode is exhausted, natural religion is soon superseded by a more discursive and literal form of thought, namely, philosophy; the Yin-Yang school of thought occupies this middle ground between natural religion and philosophy.

The Yin-Yang School

No aspect of Chinese civilization has escaped the imprint of the Yin-Yang school's doctrines. Teaching that all things and events are products of yin and yang, that phenomena succeed one another in rotation as the Five Elements take their turns, Tsou Yen (305-240 B.C.? is the central figure of the school and is usually credited with combining the
two currents into one. Briefly the concepts of yin-yang and the Five Elements may be regarded as early Chinese attempts in the direction of constructing a metaphysical cosmology for the former assays the origin of the universe, and the latter the structure of the universe.

As we have already discussed the yin-yang concept at some length, we should note that the doctrine of the Five Elements is first stressed in the literature of the "Grand Norm" in The Book of Documents and "Monthly Observances" in The Book of Rites. Attributed to a speech by the Viscount of Chi of the Shang dynasty towards the end of the twelfth century B.C., the Grand Norm provides nine categories through which the Five Elements may be seen to operate. The first category concerns both substance and nature of each of the elements: Water, to moisten and descend; Fire, to flame and ascend; Wood, to straighten and to be crooked; Metal, to yield and to be modified; and Earth, to provide for sowing and reaping. When these five in each category come fully and in their regular order, the myriad of living things will be rich and luxuriant; if there is extreme excess in any one, disaster will follow. Thus the human and natural worlds were further linked: good or bad conduct on the part of the sovereign, for example, would result in the harmony or disturbance of nature.

"The Monthly Observances" is first found in Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals of the third century B.C. It is a small almanac advising what should be done month by month in order to retain harmony with nature. Here the four seasons were correlated with the four compass points and the Five Elements; (the interval between summer and autumn became associated with the "centre" as a direction and Earth as the element). Again analogies were drawn between human conduct and natural law and set down
as the institution of Ming T'ang, the Hall of Light.

In *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* Chan Wing-tsit notes that "by the time of Tsou Yen, the two concepts (the yin-yang pair and the Five Elements) were thought of together ... When this interest in correspondence was extended to the realm of political affairs, there emerged a cyclical philosophy of history on the one hand and the mutual influence between man and Nature on the other".² With regard to the cyclical concept of history the succession of dynasties accords with the natural succession of the elements. Thus Earth, under whose power the Yellow Emperor ruled, was overcome by the Wood of the Hsia dynasty. And the Wood of this dynasty was overcome by the Metal of the Shang dynasty. The rotation of the dynastic cycle moved from theory to practice in the third century B.C. as the First Emperor of the Ch'in dynasty believed that his "Water" dynasty must govern with harshness and violence to reach accord with the transformations of the Fire Powers. As late as 1911 the official title of the Emperor was still "Emperor through (the Mandate of) Heaven and in accordance with the Movements (of the Five Powers)". If such was the influence of Yin-Yang teachings on the ruling authorities, one can only imagine its pervasiveness at a more plebian level.

The yin yang theory has also put Chinese ethical and social teachings on a cosmological basis. It has helped develop the view that things are related and that reality is a process of transformation. Philosophically, it resulted not only in the concept of a common law governing both Man and Nature but also the crucial doctrine of the unity of Man and Nature. To sum up, the Yin Yang school maintained that multiplicity arose from the constant interaction of yin and yang, that the universe is a realm
of perpetual cyclic succession of the Five Elements which produce and overcome one another in a fixed sequence, that there is mutual influence between Man and Nature, and that history is a cycle of succession based on the cycle of the Five Elements.

Confucianism

If one word could characterize the history of Chinese philosophy it would be the "humanism" that professes the unity of man and cosmos. Humanity is the pivotal idea of the Confucian system; Confucius' central concerns are the harmonious universe and the superior man. Humanity, in Chinese "jên", is human nature and righteousness, and the Confucian "jên" emphasizes the universality of human heartedness, and particularity in terms of righteousness. "Jên" is not a contemplative virtue but an active principle to be carried out; it includes not only all human beings but the universe in its totality. In this connection "jên" is expanded to the concept of one body with the universe and the generative force of all things, the process of production.

The second concept crucial to an understanding of Confucianism is that of Chung Yung, the Golden Mean. The function of this centrality is to achieve harmony, all differences must be present in their proper proportions. Centrality in the individual is the state of equilibrium in one's mind before feelings are aroused, and harmony is the state after they are aroused. In society centrality and harmony together mean complete accord in human relations. Ultimately through the moral principle of Tao, Heaven and Earth and man will attain their proper order and all things will flourish in the harmonious universal operation of the trinity.

The cyclic aspects of Confucianism remained vague and unsettled
combined the Confucian doctrines of ethics and history with the ideas of yin and yang. For Tung, man is the microcosm and Nature the macrocosm. Nature influences man because both are governed by the same material forces of yin and yang, but man as a replica of Heaven, is superior to all other things of the world. He modified the theory of dynastic succession to a cycle of "Three Reigns"—Black, White and Red corresponding to the Hsia, Shang, and Chou dynasties. His theory that a ruler rules through the Mandate of Heaven justified the exercise of imperial authority and at the same time set certain limits on it. The Confucians urged the continual re-examination of imperial rule to ensure that natural harmony was not upset. A fascinating study could be made of the efforts of Tung's Confucians to lay restraints upon the power of an absolute monarchy.

The scheme of correspondences of the Yin-Yang Confucianism of Tung Chung-shu must have had unusual fascination for the medieval Chinese, for it dominated Chinese thought for five centuries. Both Taoists and Confucians found it congenial because it was a systematized expression of the idea of harmony. Nevertheless the real spirit of harmony, whether the central harmony of Confucianism or the inner harmony of the Taoists, or the harmony between man and nature as taught by both schools, was lost. The doctrine of correspondence soon degenerated into an intellectual sport, a game or puzzle, and finally, a superstition; and was soon replaced by the rationalistic and naturalistic Neo-Taoism. 3

The next great phase or Neo-Confucianism (960-1912 A.D.) marked a return to the I Ching's principles of human nature and destiny. The chief proponent of Neo-Confucianism was Chou Tun-i (1017-1073 A.D.). Elaborating on the cosmogony of The Book of Changes, he maintained that in
the evolution of the universe from the Great Ultimate through the material forces of yin and yang and the Five Elements to the myriad things, the Five Elements are the basis of the differentiation of matter; whereas yin and yang constitute their actuality. The two forces are fundamentally one. Consequently the many are ultimately one and the many have their own correct states of being. The nature and destiny of man and thing will be correct in their differentiated state if they all follow the same universal principle. This was the central thesis of Neo-Confucianism for the next several centuries.  

Neo-Confucianism developed in three different directions: the rationalistic school of principle in the Sung period (960-1279); the idealistic school of mind in the Ming period (1368-1644) and the empirical school in the Ch'ing period (1644-1912). We shall restrict ourselves to the cyclic aspects of these schools of thought.

The central figures in the rationalistic movement were Ch'eng I (1033-1107), who formulated the major concepts and provided the basic arguments, and Chu Hsi (1130-1107), who systematized Neo-Confucianism into a rationalistic whole. To Ch'eng I, in the production and reproduction in the universe the process of daily renewal never ceases. This is a principle to make a new thing possible. But all principles are at bottom one, called the Great Ultimate. It is the cooperative functioning of principle and material force that makes the universe a cosmos and the fullest realization of "central harmony". Centrality is the order of the universe and harmony is its unalterable law.

In the operation of yin and yang, and Heaven and Earth, there is not a single moment of rest in their rise and fall, in their zenith and nadir. The constant succession may suggest that appearance and disappearance
follow a cycle, but this cycle should not be understood in the Buddhist sense as a return to the origin. The Neo-Confucian universe is like a vast furnace, and there is no such thing as material force returning to its source. Every creation is therefore a new creation, and the universe is perpetually new.\footnote{5}

When principle is endowed in man it becomes his nature—good because principle is the utmost source of all goodness. Through moral cultivation selfish desires can be eliminated and the principle of nature realized. The cultivation is by investigation of things, extension of knowledge, sincerity of the will, correctness of feeling, and cultivation of one's personal life—when this is done one will have fully developed one's nature and fulfilled one's destiny. This development of human nature, according to the rationalistic Confucian, does not stop with personal perfection but involves all things, (and here we return to the concept of "jen"). By interpreting the word in its pun of "the seed or growth;" the Neo-Confucian came to understand "jên" as the process of production itself, as well as the earlier concept of humanity.

The second or idealistic phase of Neo-Confucianism emphasized only the principle and the investigation of phenomena. The rationalistic Neo-Confucians regarded mind as a function of man's nature which was identical with principle; but to Lu Hsiang-shan, (1139-1193) the central figure of this phase, mind was principle. The mind is originally good and endowed with the innate knowledge of the good and the innate ability to do good. Filling the whole universe, through all ages and in all directions, there is the same mind. It is identical with all things, for there is nothing outside the way and there is no way outside things. To investigate phenomena is to investigate the mind; since all principles are
complete and inherent in the mind, there is no need to look outside. Lu advocated a simple, easy and direct method of recovering one's originally good nature. 6

A second philosopher of this school, Wang Yang-ming, (1472-1529) agreed with the Lu in the main, but emphasized the direction of the mind—that is, the will. To him, a thing (or affair) was nothing but the mind determined to realize it. Opposed to the rationalistic Confucian's contention that as things are investigated one's will becomes sincere, Wang maintained that the sincerity of the will must precede the investigation of things. For the next one and one-half centuries the idealistic philosophy of Wang dominated Chinese thought, but from the Seventeenth Century on, Confucianists began to demand the evident, the concrete, and the practical and this marked the beginning of the final empirical phase of Confucianism.

The last outstanding philosopher of the school, Tai Chên (1723-1777) advocated that principle is nothing but the order of things, that the way to investigate principle is not through intellectual speculation or even introspection, but by the critical, analytical, and objective study of phenomena based on objective evidence. Despite the "modern" scientific appeal of this concept, Tai was very much a traditionalist in maintaining that the universe is an unceasing process of production and reproduction.

Disregarding the abstract disparities of the various schools of Confucianism, it should be apparent that the philosophy is always a humanism which professes a harmonious universe, and the unity of man and the cosmos. His strong feelings towards humanity led Confucius to expand the idea of "jên" to include the universe in totality. He understood "jên" as the mind of man, the foundation of all goodness, and the source of all production in the universe; and made it possible that the unity of man and the universe be based on moral principles: the extension of love, the
elevation of the mind above the usual distinction between the self and others. By proclaiming man's conduct as a manifestation of the Tao and the determination of the universal harmony, he put man inspired by "jên" in the centre of the cosmos with his integral power to form a trinity with Heaven and Earth.

As a Yin-Yang Confucian, Tung Chung-shu saw that all things had their complements in yin and yang which express themselves through the medium of the Five Elements, producing and overcoming one another in a fixed sequence. Accordingly he laid the groundwork for the construction of the elaborate correspondences of the Five Elements with directions, seasons, colours, tones, tastes, and the like to underscore the macrocosm. His universe was a harmonious and organic whole and the constant succession of the yin and yang was its underlying principle. To him, man was microcosm and nature a macrocosm; and there was a mutual influence between the two. Man was still in the centre of the cosmos and was responsible for the universal harmony, even in Tung's concept of history as a constant cycle of the succession of three reigns.

Emerging from the great infusion of philosophy and Buddhism, Neo-Confucians differed in their ideas about the means to form the unity with the universe. Some of them, in understanding that the principle, the law of existence of all things, was one and its manifestations were many, insisted that this unity was based on the understanding of the nature of phenomena through an investigation of things. Others, in understanding that since all principles were inherent and complete in the mind, insisted on a unity of man and cosmos through investigation of the mind. Another, in seeing that the will was the central function of mind, professed that sincerity of will must precede investigation. Nevertheless all Neo-Confucians were in accord in understanding that the universe was a perpetual
transformation, a constant process of unceasing production and re-
production, a spiral of perpetual renewal; and that harmony was the
unalterable law of the universe.

As a whole Confucianism reflects the continuation of the cyclic
myth in its anthropocentric concept of a harmonious and organic universe;
while the everpresent theme of eternal return or the periodic regeneration
of man and cosmos is never clearer.

Taoism

Our third major philosophical school, Taoism, arose in response
to a period of political and social chaos caused by the crumbling
feudalism of the Chou dynasty. While Confucianism emphasizes social
order and an active life, and Taoism the individual life and tranquility,
it should be noted that the effects of Taoism on Chinese life move far
beyond personal quiescence: in its doctrines on government and personal
cultivation it is fully the equal of Confucianism.

Originally a hermitic school of thought which, under Yang Chu,
advised the preservation of life and avoidance of injury through
"escape", through the work of Lao Tzu it rapidly evolved metaphysical
significance as an attempt to reveal the laws underlying phenomenal
change. As these laws remain unchanging, if one regulates one's actions
in accordance with them an understanding of life is assured. A third
phase of Taoism concerns the work of Chuang Tzu, and his doctrine of
spiritual transcendence as a solution to the problems of mundane life.

The Taoism of Lao Tzu begins as one would expect with the Tao, the
Way; prior to and above all things, it is the source of all phenomena
and the way in which all things pursue their course. "Tê" is the potency
or virtue obtained from the universal Tao by each individual thing in
the process of becoming. "Tao is that by which things:come to be, and
Tê is that by which things are what they are". When Tao is possessed
by individual things, it becomes their character or virtue. The
individual's ideal life, society's ideal order, and even government's
ideal course are based on and guided by the Tao.

The central concept of Lao Tzu's Taoism, "wu-wei" or non-action,
should not be regarded as negative or quietistic, for the Tao is not an
escape from the linearity of human consciousness so much as an embrace
of the cyclic course of nature. "Wu-wei" is not inactivity so much as
taking no action that is contrary to nature. The Way is a life of
simplicity, restricting all activities which are neither necessary nor
natural. This idea is grounded in the laws that govern the changes of
things, fundamentally the notion that when a thing reaches one extreme,
it reverts from it. In accordance with the law of nature, excess is
counter-productive. As the way of life then, Tao denotes simplicity
spontaneity, tranquility, weakness and non-action.

The second major figure of Taoism, Chuang Tzu (399-295 B.C.) might
be termed the philosopher of change. To him, Nature is not only spon­
taneity but a state of constant flux; it is a universal process which
binds all things into one, equalizing all things and all opinions. In
this life of change, things transform themselves by themselves, for this
is the nature of things. A free development of our natures may lead us
to a relative kind of happiness, but absolute happiness is achieved
through higher understanding of the nature of things.

Chuang Tzu's reliance on cyclic process as the Way is best illus­
trated by his comments on his wife's death: "Now by a further change,
she has died. The whole process is like the sequence of the four seasons,
spring, summer, autumn, and winter. While she is thus lying in the
great mansion of the universe, for me to go about weeping and wailing
would be to proclaim myself ignorant of the natural laws. Therefore
I stop."^8 Clearly, through his understanding of the priority of cyclic
process, the sage is no longer affected by the changes of the world.
Thus Chuang Tzu emphasizes the inevitability of natural processes and
man's somewhat fatalistic acquiescence to them.

Because the Tao embraces all things and combines them into a unity,
absolute happiness is achieved through complete understanding of the Tao
and the identity of man with the universe. In order to be one with the
Great One, one must transcend and forget the distinctions between things--
distinctions such as life and death, me and non-me, this and that, and
the like. As is said in the Chuang Tzu: "The universe is the unity of
all things. If we attain this unity and identify ourselves with it,
then the members of our body are but so much dust and dirt, while life
and death, end and beginning, are but as the succession of day and night,
which cannot disturb our inner peace."^9 To Chuang Tzu, this is the ideal
man, for he not only transcends the ordinary distinctions of things
but also transcends the distinction between the self and the world.

In Chuang Tzu, Taoism reached a mystical height of transcendence;
whereas Lao Tzu's way is directed chiefly to handling human affairs,
that of Chuang Tzu aims chiefly at dealing with the universe. The former's
goal is social and political reform, that of the latter is transcendence
of the mundane world. All in all, Chuang Tzu's contribution to Chinese
life was inestimable: as part of Taoism his philosophy helped to
transform ancient and medieval Confucianism into Neo-Confucianism, and
he was a major influence on the later development of the Zen school of
Buddhism.
Taoism remained influential until the second century B.C. when its main tenets were codified by Liu An in *The Huai-Nan Tzu*. Here the Tao is concretized in cosmological terms; Tao originated from vacuity, and vacuity produced the universe, which in turn produced the material forces of yin and yang. In addition, *The Huai-Nan Tzu* synthesized such non-Taoist elements as the Confucian emphasis on learning as a method of self-cultivation, and the Legalist emphasis on law in government. This syncretic approach ensured the survival of Taoism at a time when Confucianism was dominant in government and official thought.

The next great resurgence of Taoism was a reaction to the social and political chaos of the waning Han dynasty. Continuous warfare, the degeneration of Confucianism into a scholasticism based on moral and social dogma, and the rise of occultism suggested a spiritual revolt. In the Wei-Chin period, scholars revived the study of the ancient philosophers and the first positive result was the notion that non-being ("wu") should not be regarded as the contrast of being, but as the pure being itself, one and undifferentiated. One facet of this movement, known as the Pure Conversation school, concentrated on a denial of the mundane in favour of romantic wandering, and cultivation of the wit and imagination. The second facet deserves closer attention.

At this time the dominant trend in Han thought was the correspondence of Nature and man and their mutual influence, but the Metaphysical Schools of Wei-Chin moved beyond these phenomena to a reality beyond space and time, the non-being of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu. These Neo-Taoists are Taoistic in their metaphysics, but Confucian in their social and political philosophy. Again, beyond the Confucian correspondences they stressed the overall principle which unites and commands all particular concepts and events.
Despite Taoist contributions to the development of the Zen school of Buddhism in the seventh and eighth centuries, and its influence on the Neo-Confucians of the eleventh century, the Confucian way of life could not abide the quietism of Taoist philosophy, and Taoism as a philosophical system ceased to exist soon after the first millennium. Its general contribution is summarized by Chan: "As a way of life, however, it has never lost its hold on Chinese culture and society. Its spirit of harmony, simplicity, and peace has been eloquently expressed in Chinese landscape painting, landscape gardening, poetry, tea drinking, etc., and its spirit of naturalism, individualism, and freedom has strongly molded Chinese life."¹⁰

We have stressed how very early in Chinese history, the reconciliation of man and time became possible only through identification of linear consciousness with cyclic process. The entire thrust of Taoism has been to lend this identification philosophical legitimacy. Lao Tzu discerned an unchanging Tao beneath the unceasing transformations of life. Living in accordance with the Tao, in harmony with nature, and avoiding all excess would result in an understanding of natural processes, and happiness. Chuang Tzu placed even greater stress of cyclicity, and interpreted the universe as a great current of constant change. By understanding Tê as Tao individualized in the nature of things, he professed a transcendence which in its extreme form denied time altogether and a more spontaneous view of life wherein one was advised to adapt one's own nature to the universal process of transformation, and become one with the universe.

Finally, although the Neo-Taoists differed in their interpretations of principle as transcendent beyond things, or as immanent in things, and
their consequent emphasis on being or non-being; they all agreed that the sage rose above all distinctions and contradictions, and remained in the midst of human affairs and responded to all transformations without discrimination. In this manner the Taoists provided a model of man whose understanding of the Tao beneath cyclic change enabled his free existence within the ever-transforming world.

Chinese Buddhism

By the second century A.D. Buddhism, the fourth major philosophical school, had become an influence in Chinese thought. Originally Buddhism was considered a religion of the occult arts, but by the third and fourth centuries as the more metaphysical Buddhist texts entered translation, Buddhism was regarded as a philosophical Taoism; and the practice of analogical analysis continued until the fifth century. No doubt the use of Taoist terminology to express Buddhist ideas contributed to a synthesis of the two, and led to the peculiarly Chinese form of Buddhism adumbrated below.

Although there appeared many schools of Buddhism in China, most are united in their treatment of three central concepts—Karma, Samsara, and Nirvana. Because the universe of an individual sentient being is the manifestation of his mind, and every mental event must produce a result no matter how far in the future, some retributive concept is necessary: this is Karma. It is the cause and its retribution is the effect. Thus the being of an individual is composed of a chain of causes and effects. Karma extends beyond ones present lifetime, and this chain of causation is called Samsara, the Wheel of Birth and Death, the main source of man's suffering. A being's essential ignorance of the nature of Samsara leads
to worldly attachments despite their illusory nature. Through the teachings of the Buddha, and in the course of many rebirths, the individual may accumulate Karma which does not crave attachment. The result is emancipation from the Wheel of Life and Death, or Nirvana. In a word, then, Nirvana is the realization or self-consciousness of the individual's original identification with the Universal Mind.

In its earliest stages in China, Buddhism and Taoism were rather indistinguishable. Thus the Pure Land school founded by Hui Yuan (334-416) expresses the hope for rebirth in the Pure Land and is an extension of the Taoist search for everlasting life on earth; the goal was not the termination of human existence, but rather, its continuation. A second line of thought, the gospel of universal salvation professed by the great monk, Tao Shêng (d. 434), maintains that because of the all-pervasiveness of the Dharma-body of the Buddha, all things can attain Buddhahood. This doctrine reflects Confucian influence, especially through the older Chinese notion that all people can become sages. At any rate by the time of Tao Shêng Buddhism had developed a theoretical background which led to the development of three truly philosophical schools: T'ien-t'ai, Hua-yen, and finally, the Ch'an or Zen school.

Founded by Chih I (538-597) of T'ien-t'ai Mountain, this first truly Chinese school of Buddhism addressed itself to the problems of dharma, or the laws of existence, and distinguished a harmony of Three Levels of Truth. As explained by Chan Wên-t'sîn, "...all dharmas are empty because they have no nature of their own but depend on causes for their production. This is the Truth of Emptiness. But dharmas are produced and do possess temporary and dependent existence. This is Temporary Truth. Being both empty and temporary is the very nature of dharmas. This is the Truth of the Mean. The three involve each other,
for Emptiness renders dharmas really empty, dependent existence makes them relatively real, and the Mean embraces both.\textsuperscript{11}

A second characteristic of the T'ien-t'ai school is a rationalizing approach to the phenomenal world which finally distinguishes three thousand worlds, the totality of manifested reality. Because each "world" interpenetrates all others, they are immanent in a single thought; that is, all phenomena are manifestations of the Universal Mind and each manifestation is the Mind in its totality. In line with the synthetic nature of much Chinese thought, the T'ien-t'ai school offers a harmony of transcendence and immanence with regard to the Buddha-nature, and leads to the next great school of Chinese Buddhism.

The Hua-yen philosophy as expounded by Fa Tsang (643-712) resembles that of the T'ien-t'ai in that each dharma is at once one and all and the world is in reality a perfect harmony. Consequently when one dharma rises, all dharmas rise with it, and vice versa. In short, the entire universe rises simultaneously. The chief difference is the basis for the harmony, for in the T'ien-t'ai school the Ten Characters of Thusness are invoked through multiplication to produce the three thousand worlds of reality, a process which is not only awkward metaphysically but depends on the mutual inclusion of all dharmas through correspondence and dependence. The Hua-yen school simplifies the unity of dharmas through mutual implication; they imply each other. Since dharmas have no substance of their own, they are empty, and it is this emptiness that combines them through implication. In a real sense, dharmas exist only in relation to each other and to the entire universe, which is a set of interrelationships.

Despite the general similarities between the Hua-yen philosophy and the rising trends of Neo-Confucianism (especially in regard to the one-is-all and all-is-one philosophy), there is one substantial difference. The
dominant rationalism of the Neo-Confucians would not admit the Buddhist notion that all phenomena are manifestations of the mind. Furthermore, through the principle that the universe "produces and reproduces," the Confucians believed that the universe is daily renewed. This creative element is lacking in the Universal Causation of the Hua-yen school.

Turning now to the final flowering of Buddhism in China, the Ch'an or Zen movement has been described by Suzuki as a school in which "the Chinese mind completely asserted itself, in a sense, in opposition to the Indian mind. Zen could not flourish in any other land or among any other people". Although Chinese scholars agree that the Bodhidharma did visit China in the early fifth century, Ch'an Buddhism did not establish independent existence until the work of Hung Jên (601-674). By focussing on The Diamond Sutra (or Scripture), Hung Jên shifted the emphasis of Chinese Buddhism from the study of Ultimate Reality, or the true nature of dharmas, to the human mind itself.

This emphasis on meditation did not so much reflect Indian asceticism as it did Taoist enlightenment through living in accord with the Tao, the way of nature. Two schools of meditation developed: the Northern school advocating gradual enlightenment through the annihilation of thought, and the Southern school which advocated sudden enlightenment, a notion based on the universality of the Buddha-mind to the extent that any occasion or any moment could serve as a "spring-board" to enlightenment. Historically the Southern school is of greater importance, and many of its ideas were transmitted into Japanese Zen Buddhism. The logical extension of spontaneous enlightenment was to diminish the importance of such typically Indian pursuits as avoidance of worldly involvement, embrace of intellectual understanding, and the search for unity with the Infinite. In a sense, Chinese meditation with its use of external influence, its worldliness, and
its emphasis on wit and insight is a continuation of the original impulse to self-realization with Time depended on involvement with the world of cyclic nature, and in the Southern school of Zen Buddhism the original impulse is recaptured.

Commenting on the humanistic trend of Chinese meditation, Chan notes that "the effect of such strong emphasis on man has been tremendous on Chinese Buddhism. Briefly, it has contributed to the shift in outlook from otherworldliness to this worldliness, in objective from individual salvation to universal salvation, in philosophy, from extreme doctrines to synthesis, in methods of freedom from religious discipline and philosophical understanding to pietism and practical insight...It is also this stress on man that has enabled Buddhism to join with Confucianism and Taoism so that the Chinese can follow all of them at the same time."13

In retrospect, Chinese Buddhism differed much from Indian Buddhism in its concept of dharma— as emptiness and temporary, for all phenomena are manifestations of the mind of Buddha-nature, and each manifestation is the mind in its totality; thus, as one dharma rises, all dharmas, the universe, rise with it and vice versa. A second difference concerns the idea of harmony—for the world of Buddha is a Perfect Harmony and is neither external to the Wheel of Birth and Death nor the phenomenal world, but is here in this present world. And finally, the Chinese concept of Nirvana differs from the somewhat nihilistic approach of the Indian religion, for Nirvana is the gradual or sudden identification with the Buddha-nature which is the true nature of all men and all things. Indeed the Chinese Nirvana is far more in tune with the Taoist unity of man and the universe.

With regard to the cyclicity of the Buddhist "Samsara", it is
tempting to draw several parallels between the Wheel of Life and Death and the eternal recurrence of the cyclic myth. At the most basic level the circle is an archetype of common occurrence; it is the impulse behind the formation of a cyclic pattern which is crucial to our analysis. The Indian Buddhist impulse is to see man enslaved by Samsara, the wheel is a function of the illusory nature of the world, and liberation is to escape from its controlling power. In Chinese Buddhism, the essentially negative Indian view is subsumed within a more anthropocentric view which maintains that liberation is possible within the world, even within the wheel.
Footnotes to the Cyclic Myth in Chinese Philosophy

1. Eliade, *Cosmos and History*, p. 3.


D. Summary

From primitive man's first realization of temporal tensions in the myths of Chinese antiquity, to the mature philosophy of Neo-Confucianism in the eighteenth century A.D., is a sweep of history so vast and deep that any overview must indeed be tentative. Yet certain principles continue to appear, evolve, and appear again; the evolution of the cyclic myth is an elastic concept responding to the temper of the time. Impelled by man's continuing awareness of the disparity between linear consciousness and the cyclic universe, the resolving identification was first suggested through myth, reinforced and codified through ritual, and finally expanded and lent intellectual legitimacy through philosophy. At no time in this labyrinthine process did the Chinese mind lose sight of the essential anthropocentricity of the cyclic construct; and this must be seen as the essential difference between Chinese and Judaeo-Christian culture through the ages. The integrity of the cyclic myth should be evident in the following summary as we review Chinese cosmology, concepts of time and history, and finally the co-existence and correlation of cyclic and linear time in Chinese civilization.

In retrospect, the development of the cyclic concept from myth and ritual to philosophy is mimetic with transitions in the concept of Tao— from a mana, or lunar symbol, to the Way of Nature, and finally to the Absolute Totality, the ultimate assertion of man's oneness with nature and cosmic regeneration. A similar point is made by Nathan Sivin in his *Chinese Conceptions of Time*: "Once the Chinese realized that there seemed to be a Way of Nature harmonizing all the pulses of natural phenomena, they came to think of Nature as a great organism itself, with a total life rhythm generated out of the harmony of all
its parts, including man.”¹ Chinese philosophers whether Confucians or Taoists, (or even Buddhists with their substitution of Buddha nature for Tao) all seem to agree that ontologically Tao is the infinite substance embracing and uniting all beings, and is also the inevitable destiny of all beings to return to for a peaceful life of virtuous harmony.

Cosmogenetically Tao is the primordial begetter of all things; and the immanent world of beings, in a state of urgent want, will resort to the transcendental world of Tao, in a sense, for the infusion of energy necessary for the performance of adequate function. This endless Becoming is the result of the unceasing interplay of Yin and Yang around which all the emblems and symbols are gathered in hierarchial order. The interplay of Yin and Yang evokes and symbolizes the cyclic rhythm of the cosmos and portrays two complementary facets of the Totality—cooperation and alternation. Amaury de Riencourt compares these processes to the dialectic: "Tao is a synthesis, that which is never quite reached because it always transforms itself into a new thesis which calls for a new antithesis and promotes a further synthesis—and thus on and on, a never ending process of development.”² Thus at the centre of the cyclic myth is the concept of Tao, evolution and perpetual change.

Several Western scholars believe that the Chinese people lack a myth of creation. Joseph Campbell maintains that "Chinese philosophy is characterized by contending systems of orientation to the world in being. There are no myths of creation.”³ In substantial agreement is Frederick Mote who professes that "they have regarded the world and man as uncreated, as constituting the central features of a spontaneously self-generating cosmos having no creator, god, ultimate cause or will external
to itself". While only the P'an Ku legend could truly be called a myth of creation, its relatively late appearance in the third century A.D. would tend to cast doubt on its authenticity as a record of the beliefs of antiquity. Yet the following must be taken into consideration: the apparent rise of rationalism reflected in the early Chou period in the emergence of the non-anthropomorphic concept of Heaven or Nature which replaced the anthropomorphic concept of a Great Ancestor Supreme Being a millennium earlier; the strong emphasis on humanity and the early euhemerism of Confucianism and its long domination of Chinese culture; the Burning of the Books and the reconstruction of the Classics by Confucian scholars; and finally the oral legends of Creation still existing among various aborigines throughout China: all these matters should admit the reconsideration of such bold denials, at least until more substantial evidence has been gathered.

At any rate, while the creation story of P'an Ku remains disputable, there can be no doubt that Chinese cosmology reflects tremendous influence of a cyclic myth. Whether as the Yin-Yang scholar's realm of perpetual cyclic succession of the Five Elements producing and overcoming one another in a fixed sequence; or as the Confucianist's constant process of unceasing production and reproduction—a harmonious spiral of perpetual renewal; or as the Taoist's constant flux of reversal, that spontaneous current which infuses all things according to their natures; or finally as the Chinese Buddhist's perfect one-in-all and all-in-one harmony of the world of Buddha; the Chinese universe always remains a harmonious and organic whole.

The essentially non-mechanistic, non-teleological, and anti-theistic cosmology of the Chinese has informed a humanism which to some
Western minds must seem rather naive. Indeed Chinese cosmology not only releases man from mechanistic doctrines of fear and sin because his errors can neither offend personal gods nor threaten his individual existence, but it offers a most "unthreatening" personal relationship to the cosmos. Evil as an active force cannot exist, nor can it be personified. The implications of such a cosmology tend to make religion superfluous and the religious formalization and institutionalization rather weak or unimportant, since there is no supreme power knowingly directing the cosmos, and no supreme spiritual entity to be prayed to or implored; but it makes a refined form of magic imperative because man has to be in control of his earthly habitat. By way of summary, Mote offers a similar conclusion: "The ritualized society of China can be adequately explained in terms of its own cosmology engendering from its cyclic concept, and it is noticeable that this cyclic, harmonious, and organic cosmology has somehow kept man's attention on life here and now and made Chinese thinkers responsible for ordaining the forms and patterns of that life."  

It is interesting to note that the word for cosmos in Chinese is "Yü-Chou", which as essentially the meaning of space-time. "Yü" denotes all the space in every direction while "Chou" connotes all the time that is yet to come and that has passed since furthest antiquity. The cosmos is thus explained in terms of time and space, or rather as we shall explain further, in terms of man's awareness of his place in time and space.

Attacking a popular Western notion of the Chinese idea of time, Joseph Needham explains: "The culture of China manifested a very sensitive consciousness of time. The Chinese did not live in a timeless dream, fixed in meditation upon the noumenal world. On the contrary,
history was for them very real and more vital than any comparably ancient people; and whether they conceived time to contain a perennial fall from ancient perfection, or to pass in cycles of glory and catastrophe, or to testify to a slow but inevitable evolution and progress, time for them brought real and fundamental change.\(^6\)

Chinese temporal thought has always involved two seemingly opposed concepts: there was a cyclical cosmic time without a beginning point, and there was a developmental linear time of human history in which man's cumulative cultural achievement had its beginning. The reconciliation of this linear historical time with cyclic time was no doubt made possible by the unique syncretism of Chinese philosophy.

In tracing the development of the institution of Ming T'ang, we have suggested the importance of a calendar which was both astronomically accurate and metaphysically central to the early culture. But according to the nature of Tao, the cosmic calendar (developed through determination of solstices, the lengths of day, month, and year, the motions of sun and moon and the planetary revolutions) was but one link in a greater, or an infinite, chain of duration. Moving beyond the basic sun-moon cycles the Chinese attempted to build longer cycles, longer rhythms, in efforts to harmonize more and more of the celestial motions.\(^7\)

Finally, about two thousand years ago, a total astronomical system was devised, producing a cycle of twenty-three million years, or a World Age. In a sense, they could envisage time beginning anew every twenty-three million years without compromising their conviction that the physical world was eternal. Despite the vastness of this cycle, moments a World Age apart were fundamentally identical, for their Tao is the same; they mark a unique combination of celestial juxtapositions and represent the same beat in the cosmic rhythm.
Within the World Age were subsumed the major theories of dynastic change: the Yin-Yang naturalist's history as a cycle of constant succession in accordance with the transformations of the Five Elements, and the Yin-Yang Confucianist's history as a cycle of constant succession of three reigns symbolized by Black, White, and Red. Thus to most Chinese history is the manifestation of Tao whose incarnation is a continuous process, ever renewed. Yet having professed this generalization, we must deal with the concepts of linear time as well presented by Joseph Needham in his lecture, *Time and Eastern Man*.

Needham discerns three major trends in Chinese thought which support his emphasis on linearity of temporal view: the historical viewpoint of Confucian humanism, the implicit historicism in concepts of the Golden Age and realisable Utopia, and the rise in Chinese historiography of "continuity history writing". Clearly if a cyclic universe implies the absence of "progress", or a definite direction to become better or worse, the Confucian doctrine of the perfectability of the individual becomes rather unsupportable. Thus the humanity of Confucianism succeeded in establishing a moral code based on an ethical philosophy of history. The temporal thought of a Confucian would perforce be more concerned with linear limits of human existence. Amaury de Riencourt suggests a similar view in maintaining that "the true goal of the higher type of Confucians was not self-realization through mystical introspection, but the securing of an honored place in the harmonious procession of historical personages". This notion of "right-timeliness" underlies the popular Western idea of the Confucian as an ancestor-worshipper.

Early Chinese attitudes to the development of human society often assume contrasting forms. The more primitive notion was of a Golden
Age of communalism of Sage-Kings from which mankind had steadily declined. On the other hand we find the idea that these culture-heroes were progenitors of something much greater than themselves, that eventually a Utopian Age of the Great Togetherness and Harmony (Ta T'ung), or the Great Peace (T'ai P'ing) would develop. Both views are united in their implied opposition to feudal society, and their concern with historical change, albeit within the vast matrix of the World Age cycle.

A third essentially linear development in Chinese temporal thought is distinguished by Needham in the rise of Chinese historiography. As Confucian historians progressed beyond the usual concerns of dynastic legitimacy, there evolved various forms of "continuity history writing" which dealt with long periods of time involving several dynasties, and this manner overcame the compartmentalization of time advocated by earlier Yin-Yang scholars.

Of course these linear aspects of Chinese temporal thought were always affected by (if not subsumed within) a more cyclic viewpoint. Indeed Needham's point is not the primacy of the linear perspective, but the development of historicism in China, a development seen necessary by some to make the leap between civilization and culture. Whatever the concerns of Confucian historians regarding imperial rule, the rulers themselves were governed by a cyclical world-view embodied in the institution of Ming T'ang. Perhaps the most reasonable approach would be to minimize the dispute as to where Chinese culture stood in the contrast between a linear perspective of time, and the myth of eternal recurrence; but to readily admit that both kinds of time were and are co-existent, or at least important on different levels and in different warp: the former in moral, social, and historical contents, while the
latter in spiritual, artistic, philosophical and metaphysical perspective. Naturally, it is the artistic and literary which will be the focus of our next chapter.

A quotation from a contemporary Chinese scholar, Thomé H. Fang, may serve by way of summary of the Chinese conception of time:

"The question is, What is time? The essence of time consists in change; the order of time proceeds with concatenation; the efficacy of time abides by durance. The rhythmic process of epochal change is wheeling round into infinitude and perpetually dovetailing the old and the new so as to issue into interpenetration which is continuant duration in creative advance. This is the way in which time generates itself by its systematic entry into a pervasive unity which constitutes the rational order of creativity. The dynamic sequence of time, ridding itself of the perished past and coming by the new into present existence, really gains something over a loss. So, the change in time is but a step to approaching eternity, which is perennial durance, whereby, before the bygone is ended, the forefront of the succeeding has come into presence. And therefore, there is here a linkage of being projecting itself into the prospect of eternity." ¹¹

The evolution of the cyclic myth through ritual and philosophy must be seen as a triumph over time, as a victory over the earliest temporal tensions of primitive man. If myth first adumbrated these tensions, if ritual was to ensure that the rhythm of man's life on Earth was in full accordance with the rhythm of Heaven, if philosophy lent intellectual legitimacy to the unity of man and the cosmos; then
this is the Tao, complete and fully understood. The motivation has always been to triumph over time. "This is why Confucians have craved so much for the continually creative potency of the heavenly Tao in the shaping of the cosmic order as a whole. This is why the Taoists have whole-heartedly cherished the ideal of nothingness for its coming to the rescue of all things relative in the realm of Being. And this is also why Chinese Buddhists have vehemently struggled for the partaking of the Buddha-nature embedded in the integral truth of the ultimate spiritual Enlightenment."12

Having established the historical background and philosophical basis of the cyclic myth, we may now turn to its survival in the literature of China.
Footnotes to Summary of the Construction of the Chinese Cyclic Myth


5. Ibid., pp. 26-27.


7. According to Sivin, "When the first complete system of cycles of all five of the planets was worked out, about two thousand years ago, it turned out that the over-all cycle was 23,639,040 years long. It would take that long for the big wheel which drove all of the little wheels to revolve once and a new world age would be starting-- when, on a New Year's Day, which is also the first day of the month, the sun, moon, and all the planets were lined up next to each other like a string of pearls". Sivin, op. cit., p. 88.


12. Ibid., p. 259.
III

THE CYCLIC MYTH

IN CHINESE LITERATURE
A. The Cyclic Myth in Chinese Poetry

Myth, as a mode of cognition or a narrative resurrection of unconscious drives, wishes, fears and conflicts, circumflects a verbal universe in which man's psychological, philosophical, religious, social and even political history are really one in the juxtaposition and succession of the stages of gods, heroes, and men. As rites degenerate, myth merges inseparably into and with literature, art, religion and various other symbolic forms. Thus Northrop Frye notes that "there are two structures in a culture which descend from mythology: one is literature which inherits the fictional and metaphorical patterns of mythology, and the other is a body of integrating or cohering ideas, also mainly fictional, in religion, philosophy, and kindred disciplines".¹ In our study of Chinese literature it is truly impossible to separate the cyclic myth and its developments from the works studied. Indeed, by definition, within a homogeneous culture such a separation would be unthinkable.

The history of Chinese literature properly begins in the fifth and fourth century B.C. in the Yellow River and Yangtze regions, the twin cradles of ancient Chinese civilization. Concerning the poetry of the former area, it is said that Confucius (551-479 B.C.) selected some three hundred poems into an anthology, The Classic Of Poetry. Composed mainly of ballads and festal songs, The Classic of Poetry rightly belongs in the company of the Vedas, Homeric epics, and Psalms, perhaps more so with the latter because of its intimate expression of the voice and feelings of the common people. It maintains a spontaneous confidence in life which later Chinese poetry never really recaptures, and has since become the core of Confucian literature.
Whereas Chinese history had its beginning in the northern region where we first find reference to sage-kings and dynastic rulers of antiquity, Chinese mythology found a favorable climate for development in the southern or Yangtze area. Unlike the harsher northern surroundings, the fertile Yangtze region enabled its residents to live in comparative ease, to indulge in dreams of the romantic and the supernatural. These traits gave rise to a literature of metric songs different from The Classic of Poetry in their lyric nature and romantic spirit. Indeed The Songs of the South is more sentimental, even self-conscious, and often evokes the supernatural and the otherworldly. Together these two schools constitute the original mainstream of Chinese poetry.

Li Sao

The greatest solo voice of The Songs of the South was Ch'ü Yuan (343-277 B.C.). His "Li Sao" (Encountering Sorrow) is the earliest narrative poem of any length to survive. A brief biography reveals a life of political upheaval and exile which rivals that of Dante. As a member of the ruling house of the state of Ch'u, his brilliant diplomatic career was shadowed by the jealous intrigues of his fellow ministers. His first banishment in 305 B.C. occasioned many of his most brilliant lyric songs: Encountering Sorrow, Outpouring of Sorrow, and Inquiry Into the Cosmos. A second exile in 286 B.C. resulted in his "Summoning the Soul;" "Thinking of the Fair One;" and "Crossing the River". The capital of Ch'ü was finally plundered and ruined by the conquering army of Ch'in in 278 B.C., and at the age of sixty-six Ch'ü composed "Lament for the Capital;" and "Embracing the Sand;" expressions of his rejection of patriotic hope. According to legend, one year later, on the fifth day of the fifth moon he committed suicide by drowning.
As the first great poet of China, Ch’ü Yüan has been called the father of Chinese poetry and has become a cultural hero. In some southern territories he has even been worshipped as a water-deity. At any rate, the day of his death is often designated as Poet’s Day, and the Dragon Boat Festival commemorates his drowning.

Generally speaking, "Li Sao" is allegoric and often anagogic. It consists of two parts: the tristesse and the quest, which David Hawkes designates as the "tristia" and the "itineraria". The tristia expresses the poet’s sorrow, complaint, and resentment against a malicious society which through slanderous misrepresentation has separated him from the Fair One he serves. The itineraria describes the poet’s journey in search of a new mate, perhaps a goddess or legendary beauty, and finally its end whereby spiritual transcendence triumphs over embittered despair and anguished nostalgia.

"Li Sao" begins with the poet’s declaration of divine ancestry through Kao Yang, or Chuan Hsu, the great grandson of the Sovereign God of the North who had supervised the Estrangement of Earth from Heaven. This declaration justifies the derivation of the poet’s oracular names, "True Examplar," and "Divine Balance". In the second section the poet catalogs his innate and cultivate virtues, then claims that he is in "fearful pursuit" of Time. The problem appears to be one of reconciling the diurnal and seasonal cycles with which the poet clearly identifies, to the longer cycle of a human lifetime, specifically the ephemerality of youth and love.

Using the narrative device of direct quotation, the poet next recalls his encouragement of the Fair One to follow him. He cites examples of legendary kings who also followed a virtuous path and so
preserved their peace and beauty. His speech is a failure; the Fair One remains inconstant, and the poet is exiled. Cynically he proclaims how "loyalty brings disaster;" yet involves the ninefold heaven to witness his enduring loyalty.

In resignation and as consolation, he devotes himself to the cultivation of flowers: his garden is as large as it is various. (I. iv.) At this point the blossom imagery begins to serve many purposes, for the cultivation of flowers is linked to the personal cultivation necessary to achieve liberation from sorrow. Moreover there is a constancy within the vegetative cycle which the poet contrasts to the inconstancies of the mundane world. Through identification with cyclic nature, the poet believes his "mind can be truly beautiful." By clothing himself with fragrant flowers, he follows the solemn way of P'eng Hsien, an ancient sage recluse, and attempts to transcend the ephemeral. Finally, the poet offers an anguished contrast between his way of life and that of a "generation of cunning artificers." (I. vii.) He will bear blame and endure insults, but keep himself pure and spotless and die in righteousness. There follows a moment of vacillation, but again the poet resolves to continue on his virtuous path: he will travel the four quarters of the world gathering flowers and fragrances to fulfill his constant love for beauty and nourish his immanent virtue. Here Ch'ü Yuan makes explicit the Taoist notion that love of nature leads to transcendence of the material world: "Even if my body were dismembered;/...how could dismemberment ever hurt my mind?" (I. viii.)

An encounter with Nü Hsü, Goddess of Matchmaking, fails to alter the poet's course as she warns that the consequence of persistence is
often death, and attempts to bring about a compromise between the poet and the sophisticated world. (I. ix.) In reply, he appeals to the ancient sage-king, Shun, for inner guidance, and following an inventory of the rise and fall of dynasties, concludes that the high god in Heaven knows no partiality and allows only the good and virtuous to flourish. The poet therefore decides to endure his isolation from the mundane world and his estrangement from the Fair One. (I. x.) This confirmation signals the end of the tristia; in a mood of embittered despair the poet completes his anxious preparations for the celestial journey to come.

The itineraria begins with the poet's celestial journey to the cosmic mountain, K'un Lun.\(^5\) In Chinese mythology, Mount K'un Lun is the abode of perfect blessedness and the passageway to Heaven. It consists of five circular levels along a spiral path but is considered beyond mortal reach. Nevertheless the wandering poet quickly ascends to the Hanging Gardens, the uppermost circle—another indication of his innate beauty and cultivated virtue. It is a spiritual realm of immortality, and by ascending it one may command the wind, the rain, and the lesser gods and goddesses. Perhaps reminded of mundane ephemerality, the wanderer's first command is for Time to stop. He waters his dragon-steeds at the Lake of Purity,\(^6\) and rests under the cosmic tree, Fu Sang,\(^7\) before rushing his glittering train to the gates of Heaven, the realm of pure divinity. Here his progress is checked by the Superintendent of the Nine Heavens, Lu Wu.

Through a night of indecision, the poet mends his orchid garments and crosses the White Water, one of the colorful rivers flowing out of the Lake of Purity where Hsi Wang Mu, the Supernal Goddess, dwells. He ascends Mount Cool Wind in the fourth circle, the realm of immortality,\(^8\)
and despairs for again there is no fair lady. (II. ii.) Sending one of his attendant gods in search of a nymph, he remains in the House of Spring where Ch'ung, the assistant to the Sovereign God of the East and the grandson of Chuan Hsiü, the poet's divine ancestor, is the God of Spring and Life. Despite the efforts of the Patroness of Marriage as go-between, the nymph proves to be a rather vain hedonist and very difficult to woo. The poet resolves to seek elsewhere for his mate. (II. iii.)

Our wanderer scours the heavens and the four quarters of the earth before finding the jade tower in which Chien Ti, a legendary beauty and later the ancestress of the House of Shang, is confined by her father, the Lord of Sung. As homage, the poet sends a magpie, then a phoenix, yet fails in competition with his virtuous rival, the first ancestor of the House of Shang. (II. iv.) At this point the poet turns to woo the Lord of Yü's two princesses, but they live in virtue and are to marry Prince Sao K'ang. The wanderer laments the inaccessibility of sage-kings and their daughters the world over, and despairs his present situation. (II. v.)

For consolation, the poet seeks out sacred stalks and approaches Ling Fên for a divination. An auspicious oracle is divined: "Beauty is always bound to find its mate./ Who that was truly fair was ever without lovers?" (II. vi.) Following the diviner's encouragement to seek elsewhere for a truly fair lady, the poet takes this opportunity to renew criticism of the follies of the mundane world. In indecision he consults the spirit of Wu Hsien, the chief of the shaman ancestors. After enumerating historical examples, Wu Hsien addresses the poet in oracular style:
To and fro in the earth you must everywhere wander,
Seeking for one whose thoughts are of your own measure...
As long as your soul within is beautiful,
What need have you of a matchmaker?...
Gather the flower of youth before it is too late,
While the fair season is still not yet over." (II. vii.)

In retrospect the poet comes to a bitter realization: that the world is a disordered tumult of changing and drifts to conform to evil counsel; that all fragrant flowers such as orchids and peppers have been transformed into worthless mugworts; all because they have no persistent care for beauty. With only his garland left in pristine fragrance, the poet decides to follow Ling Fên's advice and transcend the moribund world by continuing his journey in quest of a mate. (II. viii.)

In his jade and ivory chariot, accompanied by an increased retinue, the poet departs for Mount K'un Lun and world's western extremity. In Chinese mythology, beyond the Dark Water lies the crescent of Siṅking Sand, the western boundary of earth and Heaven. Beyond lie the sacred mountains K'un Lun, Ch'ang Liu, and Yü, the abodes of the Gods of Completion and Perfection, the place of sunset and sundown. It is the boundary toward which Titan P'êng Tsu at the age of eight hundred travels in search of immortality. Crossing the blood-red Siṅking Sand on a bridge of dragons, the poet soars through the Nine Heavens and the Nine Underworlds in the poem's most floridly descriptive passage. But a sudden glimpse of his old home in the distance causes both groom and dragons to refuse to go on. The journey is brought to an abrupt end.

There remains only an Envoi (II. x.) in which the poet reaffirms his decision to remain in exile, and vows to continue after P'êng Hsien's example—to quest for sacred plants and divine blossoms, and finally, a
soul-mate. The poem ends with a triumphant restatement of the value of virtuous cultivation and reclusiveness as the path to transcendence.

Before elucidating the cyclic aspects of "Li Sao", it is necessary to provide some background to the intellectual milieu in which it was written. The Third Century B.C. in China was a time of disillusionment and self-realization, a time when magic, ritual, and myth had not been superseded by rationalism and abstraction. Myths of ancient gods and goddesses existed simultaneously with the rising systematization of the Yin-Yang school, or the abstracting tendencies of Taoism and Confucianism alike. Certainly, ancestor worship and use of Pa Kua, the precursor to the I Ching, in divination and philosophy was still popular. In fact the use of magic and rite still prevailed in the southern regions, especially among the barbaric peoples where Ch'ü Yuán was exiled. With this in mind, it is no surprise that the identity of the poet as a mystic, a Yin-Yang disciple, a Confucian, or a Taoist has been disputed for centuries. It is only recently that scholars have reached consentient agreement on the profusion and profundity of Ch'ü Yuán's sources. Thus the traditional bureaucratic interpretation of "Li Sao" has yielded to the study of sensus spiritualis. "Li Sao" holds a mirror to its turbulent age, and is a condensed song of the various speculations of the era.

Structurally speaking, the tristia of "Li Sao" consists of a realization and a decision which require the search for fragrant blossoms and the quest for a mate which in turn constitutes the progress of the itineraria. This realization develops from the tragic sense of the poet's self-consciousness upon his divorcement from the Fair Lady, his solitude in the mundane world, and his estrangement from the cosmos. The notion that the poet is isolated in time as well as space is reinforced by images
of the "swift steeds" of Time and the ephemerality of life, manifested in the periodic changes of seasons and the incessant transformations of the vegetable world. This crucial awareness creates an embittered nostalgia and an anguished desire for reconciliation; both demand self-cultivation and self-fulfillment through vegetable adornment as a means of obtaining a unity with the Tao, fulfilling the quest for a mate, and ensuring the progress of the cosmic journey.

The Chinese have always believed that there is mutual relationship between man and cosmos, and it is in this connection that evergreen stalks, beautiful flowers, and fragrant blossoms are understood to conceive a sacred quality capable of bestowing purity, perfection, and even, divinity. The symbolism of vegetable adornment in "Li Sao" has a shamanic origin from Chiu Ko (The Nine Songs), the erotic liturgy of the southern barbarian which was refined and edited by Ch'u Yuan under royal command.¹³ "Li Sao's" vegetable world, as in the liturgy, is one of sharp contrast between such rank weeds and pale flowers as mugwort and dogwood, symbolizing the slanderous and the profane; and such beautiful and fragrant flowers as orchid and pepper which symbolize the virtuous and the divine. In formative trope, the latter flowers become a configuration of the poet's innate virtue as a descendent of the God of Spring and Wood. Moreover, once the poet confronts his self-conscious awareness, they become an emblem and a pledge of his persistent self-cultivation of virtue and incessant pursuit of unity with the "fair lady" and the course. Finally, upon the defeat of the orchid in its allegorical battle with the weed, the emblem becomes the primary motif of the amor quest and cosmic journey.

With regard to the itineraria we find two major themes, the quest itself and the consequent "progress" within the quest: both concepts share resemblances to the myth of Mount K'un Lun, the Feng Shan ritual,
and the practices of the Ming T'ang institute.

At the heart of the poem is the resolution of temporal tensions (symbolic in exile) through reconciliation and union with the divine. Whether we speak of the emperor's mimetic cosmic journey through monthly, directional, and seasonal progression in the symmetrical microcosmic Ming T'ang; or his sacred journey and thanksgiving sacrifice to Mount K'un Lun or the other cosmic mountains; or the solar and lunar symbols of regeneration in the Feng Shan ritual; each is concerned with re-establishing a unity with the cosmos, to re-harmonize the powers of Heaven, Earth, and Man and partake of the regeneration. Similarly, in "Li Sao", the motivation behind quest and progress is a cosmological reconciliation.

According to David Hawkes, the idea of the progress is magical, for a complete and successful circuit of the cosmos will make one a lord of the universe, able to command any of its powers at will. Thus the poet, as the representative seeking shaman or emperor, undertakes a ritual journey consisting of ascent to the hub of the cosmos, then a circuit of the various quarters of the mandala-like universe, and finally a return to the centre of power. The wanderer is initially successful, but the refusal of Heaven's guardian to admit the poet (II. i.) indicates that reconciliation is not yet possible, that the circuit must be completed within the quest.

Again, the symbolism of beauty and the feminine in "Li Sao" has much to do with primitive thought. The metaphorical kenning of flower to virtuous king or beautiful goddess is found in The Classic of Poetry and the liturgical ritual of Chiu Ko; while the moon-earth-woman configuration as the regenerative feminine requiring the masculine complement for virtuous unity is evident in some shamanic rituals and especially in the I Ching.
Despite scholarly dispute as to the specific allegory of the goddess or beauty, (whether as the goddess in myth, the nymph in shamanic liturgy, or the virtuous king or way of humanity in Confucian interpretation), a common ground is indicated by returning to the original cyclic myth with its impulse to temporal reconciliation, and its emphasis on the periodic alternation of opposites.

The amor quest is undertaken in the correct circuit according to the progress of due direction. Although the quest is not fulfilled, due to the necessity of the allegory resembling the poet's futile mundane pursuit, the circuit progress has assured him a harmony with the cosmos and granted him reascendance to the hub of the universe. Spiritual success is indicated by his transcendent flight between the Nin Heavens and the Nine Earths, and in the reception of the Nine Heavenly Hymns and the Nine Divine Dances. While the poet's nostalgia for his ancestral home in the capital of Ch'u underscores the inevitably unsuccessful quest in the amor allegory, and brings the tragic futility of his pietas to a climax, it in turn reinforces the triumph of spiritual transcendence and the way of the sage recluse. Metaphorically speaking, the poet is never closer to "home" than when he is soaring at the western extreme of the universe in harmonious unity with the cosmos.

In a word, the poetic amor and pietas of the romance find their allegorical expression and formative tropes in the mythos of the quest and progress; each in turn may be seen as abstractions of the cyclic myth, the paradoxical centre of the poem. Exiled from all that he loves, the poet focuses on the decadent aspect of cycle with regard to society, and the incessant aspect of cycle with regard to the time of natural succession. This, in turn, leads him to lament the linear aspect of human life.
Paradoxically it is the obverse cyclic aspects which provide his liberation: the re-creative side of natural cycle evident in his concern for vegetable garments; and his use of incessant change to provide both the model for his continued wanderings, and the constancy necessary to a transcendent understanding of human life in the Taoist sense, and finally his reconciliation with time and the cosmos.

In formation of literary genre, "Li Sao" has influenced other poets appearing in The Songs of the South, and poets in succeeding generations in both style and spirit. Prosodically, its emblematic density contributed much to the development of the "rhapsody" in the literature of the Han dynasty. Thematically speaking, the cosmic progress and quest of a goddess reappear in such poetic works as "The Rhapsody of the Goddess" by Sung Yu of the Warring period, "The Celestial Journey of the Great Man" by Ssu Ma Hsiang Ju of the Western Han period, "The Rhapsody of the Nymph of River Lo" by Ts'ao Chih of the Three Kingdoms period, and in poems of mystic journeys by Kuo P'u and his contemporaries in the Chin dynasty. Hawkes has noted in his study of the quest archetype in Asian literature that the panoramic enumeration of cosmic progress in "Li Sao" and the liturgy of shamanism has in due time become a cosmological approach to art and literature. Thus in the third century A.D., Lu Chi's "Rhapsody of Literature" describes the creative writer as a poet-magician, an itinerant mystic who explores the universe to acquire the powers of literary creation:
"Taking his position at the hub of things, the writer contemplates the mystery of the universe...

His spirit gallops to the eight ends of the universe;
His mind wanders along vast distance.
In the end, as his mood dawns clearer and clearer,
object,
Clean-cut now in outline, shove one another forward.
He sips the essence of letters; he rinses his mouth
With the extract of the six arts.
Floating on a heavenly lake, he swims along;
Plunging into the nether spring he immerses himself." 18

With regard to the tristia, although receiving no similar generic development, through the poetry of Sung Yü it has received the focus of "sorrow over autumn." Thus in Chinese literature the image of autumn has become not only an allusion to the tristia of "Li Sao," but a symbol of man's temporal awareness of the ephemerality of being, of his realization of his estrangement from the cycle of eternal return. 19
Similar to the Warring period background of "Li Sao," political turmoil, warfare and natural disasters of the third and fourth centuries A.D. form the background to the next poet under study, T'ao Ch'ien.

In desperation the Chinese turned from the romantic poetry of itinerancy and the steadily retreating mythological worldview to embrace that syncretist movement which saw the rise of Chinese Buddhism and the synthesis of Confucianism and Taoism with regard to the unity of man and nature. The exemplary man became the sage in intimate companionship with nature, who rises above all distinctions and contradictions, but remains in the midst of human affairs and responds to all transformations spontaneously without discrimination. In literature, the spiritual reclusiveness of "Li Sao" coupled with the diminution of confidence in life inherited from The Classic of Poetry engendered a realm of tranquility accessible to earth-bound mortals. A major preoccupation was the attainment of a peace of mind which enable one to enjoy contentment within his meager existence.

T'ao Ch'ien (or T'ao Yuan-Ming, 365-427 A.D.) lived through
the turbulent waning of the Chin dynasty, a half-century of revolution, banditry, and regicide. One of China's truly great writers, he initially attempted to use his education in service to the state but was unable to compromise his principles to the corrupt bureaucracy of the time. In 405 A.D., he resigned his magisterial post, the occasion of his "Rhapsody of the Return," and embraced the life of the peasant. Crop failures and fires could not convince him to exchange relative poverty for the barren rewards of respectability, and his poetry survives as a testament to the joys of living in simple harmony with nature. T'ao Ch'ien's poetry best expresses the dilemma of a man of good will born into the troubled times of medieval China. As a poet and recluse he does more than give meaning to a particularly chaotic period of Chinese history; he belongs to that small group of poets who are properly called philosophical, who crystallize attitudes toward life that are valid in other times and places. He has long been recognized by Chinese critics as the master of poetry of reclusion and the father of Chinese pastoral poetry. His unique philosophy of natural harmony and assimilation with cosmic change is best illustrated in his rhapsody of the return, "Homing".

On one level "Homing" is the revelation of the gradual fulfillment of man's spiritual quest for eternal return. Perhaps recalling "Li Sao" it exhibits a binary structure: the call to return and the return itself. Through severe self-examination within a "tristia" similar to that of "Li Sao", the poet discovers this situation to be that of a gardener overcome by the weeds of existence, an allusion to the wasted garden of orchids in "Li Sao"; this is the immediate motive behind the poet's decisive urge to return.
The ruined garden for which the poet grieves may be seen as the corrupted mundane world whose attachments have bound the poet to this point in his life. His bitter disillusionment has developed through a lifetime of frustrations, and over the historical truths revealed by ancient sages and virtuous kings, and even over the Confucian doctrine of service and moral duty to mankind. The sense of homelessness which the poet feels in bureaucratic service is best expressed in another of T'ao's works, the fourth of "Twenty Poems After Drinking Wine" through the image of the lost bird.

"Anxious and seeking, the bird lost from the flock-
The sun declines, and still he flies alone,
Back and forth without a place to rest;
From night to night, his cry becomes more sad,
A piercing sound of yearning for the dawn,
So far from home, with nothing for support..."  

The plaintive sound of the bird's yearning for its nest is echoed in the poet's profound nostalgia for home. To the poet the homecoming call demands reclusion from the sophisticated world:

"By mischance I fell into the dusty net
And was thirteen years away from home.
The migrant bird longs for its native grove.
The fish in the pond recalls its former depths".

What is most important is the direction of "home"; return does not point to Mount K'un Lun of mythology, nor to the archaic Golden Age, but to the present, to the family home in the forest of the southern hill. The return is neither divine nor mythic, but human and existential. The minutiiae of pastoral existence circumscribe the destiny and the immanent content of the
"return to nature". While nature, as the poet and his contemporary
syncretic metaphysicians comprehend, is a state of spontaneity in which
the myriads of things in an incessant flux exist and transform themselves
according to their own immanent principles. To life or existence is
therefore attributed an essence of constant change. To the return or
quest for meaning is assigned the requirement of harmony with nature, to
plunge into the flux of transformation, for only within the flux can man
unite himself with the infinite and enjoy the regeneration of eternal
return. In other words, it is in the perfect fusion, the pre-experiential
indifferentiation, of the self and nature that existence can become a
meaningful oneness. These ideas form the undercurrent of one of T'ao's
most famous poems, the fifth of "Twenty Poems After Drinking Wine":

"I built my cottage among the habitations of men,
Yet there is no clamor of passing carts and horses.
You would like to know how it could be?
With the mind detached, one's place becomes remote.
Picking chrysanthemums by the eastern hedge
I catch sight of the distant southern hills:
The mountain air is lovely as the sun sets
And flocks of flying birds return together.
In these things is the fundamental truth,
I would like to tell, but lack the words".24

The absolute detachment of the mind is a spiritual discernment
derived from the soul's orientation to nature. It not only transfers
the hut into remote distance and absolves the poet from worldly corruption,
but enables him to perceive the epiphany of oneness between chrysanthemum,
hill, and self.

To return, then, to the second part of "Homing", we may distinguish
several stages in the poet's reintegrative process: a linear progress
home, a re-identification with its surroudings and the garden reunion,
a harmony with nature, and assimilation with cosmic change. Due to the
human and existential spirit of the pastoral, (and in contrast to "Li Sao"), the linear progress acquires no ritual significance beyond structural transition. The rhythms of rocking boat and wafting breeze cease with the sudden appearance of home. Anxieties end as external and internal landscapes become allied. Next the alliance is extended with the thematic entrance of domestic bliss. A sense of spiritual belonging and contentment- a combination of a cup of wine, a simple window sill, and a little room reflects the accessibility and the self-sufficiency of the garden. This in turn leads the poet to willingly proclaim the end of desire and makes his further reunion with the garden possible. (II. i.)

Within the garden the poet's contentment fosters an assimilation with the simplicity and the spontaneity of nature. This is a world of perpetual motion- clouds and birds alike share a "homing" impulse. As a microcosm of the world of change, the garden offers reconciliation of estrangement which the corrupt secular world could not. In the next section (II. iv.) the poet moves beyond his peaceful enclave to delight in the exploration of his new found harmony with nature- "sensing my life of movement has come to rest". Paradoxically the "rest" of the poet is within the centre of an everchanging nature, for rest is not quiescence but active involvement and identification with natural cycle and eternal return: "nature's myriad creatures flourishing in season". Finally, reflecting upon the mundane world and the state of nature, the poet achieves a transcendent level of discernment. The new consciousness is a philosophy of self-assimilation within the Great Change; it is a renunciation of both wealth and honour and the paradisial myths of Mount K'un Lun, and a triumph over death. Of most importance is the promise of a harmonious life of
contentment for each individual without recourse to the supernatural.

From a structural viewpoint, "Homing" presents the reconciliation of man and nature through spatial and temporal orientation. Beginning with the self's re-identification with home in a single day, the poem expands its focus to a daily reunion with the garden, to a seasonal harmony with nature, and finally to total assimilation with the incessant change of the infinite. As a pastoral abstraction of the mentality behind the cyclic myth in terms of man's harmony with nature as spontaneous change and existence as an integral oneness, "Homing" offers an escape from the tragic sense of randomness, estrangement, and finitude which was unique in Chinese literature and extremely influential.

The pastoral of T'ao Ch'ien with its profound contemplation of life and nature, and its depiction of epiphanies of man's reunion with home, garden, and nature engendered the theme of amor for nature in the new song-style poetry and in the aesthetics of landscape poetry which followed. This in turn heralded the fusion of Chinese northern and southern cultures, and the subsequent richness of the T'ang dynasty- the second great flowering of Chinese literary culture.
B. The Cyclic Myth in Chinese Drama

As a mature art form Chinese drama owes much to the Mongol emperor, Yüan Tai-tsung, whose distrust of scholars led to the abolition of academic examinations for those seeking official preferment. As a result, in the late thirteenth century many scholars turned to the theatre and replaced the playwright-actors as masters of the most popular art of the time. Evolving from such diverse sources as mediumistic séances, ritual and court entertainments, martial mask-dances, puppet shows and shadow plays, and of course, colloquial storytelling, the "variety play" of the Sung dynasty (960-1279 A.D.) had already achieved a well-integrated narrative structure. But for the most part, these Sung plays were the creations of the Book Guild, actors, and folk writers, and it remained for the Confucian scholars, robbed of court positions by Yüan's decree, to perfect the two mainstreams of Chinese theatre.

The Northern Play, popular in the capital and often composed by poets as an intellectual pastime, was a mature drama of four scenes' duration. Unfortunately from a critical viewpoint, these early plays were judged not so much by plot action or character development as by the lyric poetry chanted by the two lead roles. Contemporary with the Northern Play, but dramatically more interesting was the Southern Show school of Hang-Chou, the most prosperous city of the southern districts. According to Lin Wên-kêng, the Southern Show was full-fledged play in song and dialogue written in colloquial language; structurally, the dialogue advanced dramatic action, while the songs, arranged in sequence, vividly expressed the heightened sentiments of the characters. By 1260 A.D., with the unification of the Yüan empire the two dramatic forms had merged with
the Southern Show characteristically dominant. With the rise of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.), the Yuan drama was further refined into "Ch'uan Ch'i", literally "legend of the strange" or dramatic romance.

The Ch'uan Ch'i is perhaps the lengthiest of dramatic sub-genres, composed of forty or more scenes and characterized by songs chanted in alternate solo or in chorus by several characters in the play. The greatest dramatic achievement of the Ch'uan Ch'i genre, and probably of the entire Ming dynasty, were the "Four Dream plays" of T'ang Hsien-tsu (1550-1616 A.D.) Although contemporary with Shakespeare, the intellectual milieu of the Ming period is so utterly different from the Elizabethan, that philosophical background may not be ignored before turning to the work of the dramatist himself.

In a very concrete sense Ming thought originated in an experience of the self and an aspiration to sagehood, to which the single key was the rationalistic Neo-Confucian doctrine that man in his essential nature is identical with all nature and of the same substance as all things forming one body with Heaven, Earth, and all things. Theoretically this identity is based on the equation of "jén" (human-heartedness, humanity, love) with life itself for the fundamental characteristic of the universe is its productivity or creativity, and man too is seen as creative in his very essence. They believed that self-transcendence could be attained by placing one's ethical and cultural activity in participation with the creative process of Heaven and Earth, and by affirming one's humanity wherein one's spontaneous desire was naturally in accordance with Heaven. Thus not only did sagehood depend on one's speculation of the mind and nature of man, but man's bodily self and his moral mind was posited as the centre of creation, and the direct attainment of sagehood was justified.
Of the many schools of Neo-Confucian thought, the idealism of Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529) found an advocate in Lo Ju-fang, whose vitalistic and relatively existentialist philosophy was most adaptable to the romantic, emotional, and sensual temper of the time, and serves as the best metaphysical basis of T'ang's dramatic work.

As a prominent "existential" Confucian of the Left Wing school, Lo Ju-fang (1515-1589) regards the perpetual renewal of life as a ceaseless vitality, intrinsically good, and as the animating principle of the universe. He equates "shēng" (life or vitality) with "jên", and further identifies this jên with "jên" (man) in the fact that the birth of a person is due to the latent vitality implicit in the process of creation and is a partaking of the joy of spontaneous creativity. By equating man, love, and vitality, Lo Ju-fang has existentially identified human nature with the inherently good vitality of life, and assimilated the self to the perpetual regeneration of the universe through humanity as an incessant animating power of creation. In his philosophy man is truly the crossroads of creation, spontaneously free, but responsible to maintain the way of nature. This vitalistic strain of Lo's thought is evident in the "Four Dreams"—especially in Mu Tan T'ing Huan Hun Chi (The Return of the Soul to the Peony Pavilion), and Han Tan Mêng Chi (The Dream on A pillow in Han Tan Inn), the great dramas of T'ang Hsien-tsu, a student of Lo and a leading literary and intellectual figure in the sixteenth century China.

Mu Tan T'ing Huan Hun Chi

Despite a lifelong passion for Yüan drama, T'ang Hsien-tsu's literary efforts did not begin until his retirement from a controversial magisterial career. Settling in Lin-ch'uan, his family home, he completed The Peony Pavilion in 1598. It is a romance of fifty-five scenes which
demonstrates mastery of both colloquial and poetic diction (especially with regard to puns and allusions), and skillful characterization in its dramatization of human conflict within the fantasy of a dream allegory. As the play is readily available in translation, a brief synopsis will serve for purposes of analysis.

Following the seasonal rotation which is one of the structural hallmarks of the play, the spring phase begins in the Southern Sung dynasty with a promising young scholar, Liu Ch'un-ch'ing, literally "Lover of Spring". As a gardener in Canton, Liu dreamed of a beautiful maiden beckoning him to a life of virtuous prosperity from beneath a plum tree. Obsessed by her beauty and his Confucian desires for official success, Liu adopts a new name, "Mêng-mei", literally "Dreamer of the Plum". The dream-maiden is Tu Li-niang or Fair Bride, the daughter of a sternly rational Confucian, Prefect Tu. Perceiving only the importance of grace and virtue in womanhood, Tu maintains his daughter in virtual seclusion under the tutelage of Ch'en, an aged Confucian pedant. But the return of spring has stirred the blood of youth, and Fair Bride undertakes a quest of the heart in opposition to the naive love songs of the Golden Age, the favorites of Tutor Ch'en. Encouraged by her vivacious handmaiden, Ch'un Hsiang (Spring Fragrance), Fair Bride adorns herself in spring finery and visits the family's forbidden garden. Overcome by the emotions of spring, she soon returns to her room and dreams of a young scholar who lures her into the Peony Pavilion with a willow twig and endearing words. Their dream-romance blossoms immediately but farewells are inevitable. Fair Bride awakes to profound love-sickness, but on returning to the garden Pavilion she finds only a large plum tree. In despair she consoles herself by believing that after death she could at
least be buried under the plum tree so as to be near her dream love.

Fair Bride's lovesickness continues, and summer brings the shocking realization that her beauty is fading. She paints a self-portrait to immortalize her loveliness. Her illness is, of course, a cause for parental concern but Prefect Tu and Tutor Ch'en regard it as a mere "flu", while her mother employs Nun Stone Fairy to dispel the evil spirits which she blames for the lovesickness.

As autumn brings the fall of beauty, Fair Bride's condition worsens. On mid-autumn day, the festival of moon and lover, she is buried under the plum tree while her portrait is hidden within the Peony Pavilion. Meanwhile Prefect Tu has been appointed Tribunate in Yang-chou city, but before his departure he establishes a memorial convent superintended by Nun Stone Fairy and Tutor Ch'en.

In the winter phase the soul of Fair Bride descends into Hades, but judgement is suspended by the administrative recitification of the tenth circle, and her soul remains in Limbo. Three winters pass, and we return to the progress of young Liu. Travelling to the capital for his academic examinations, Liu slips on river ice but is rescued by Tutor Ch'en and removed to the Blossom Convent for recuperation. Meanwhile Fair Bride is saved from an inauspicious transmogrification by the Flower Goddess of the Peony Pavilion who intervenes on her behalf. The Goddess' plea so moves the Judge of Metempsychosis that he grants Fair Bride a new life and return to the garden.

Spring returns, and the convalescing Liu discovers Fair Bride's self-portrait in the Pavilion. Naturally he soon realizes that this is the image of his dream-love, and calls for the painting to become reality. That night Fair Bride rejoins the upper world (though in ghost-like form)
and in three successive nights she reveals the mystery of her love, death, and resurrection, bidding Liu to exhume her body that they might enjoy the fruits of corporeal love. Liu induces Nun Stone Fairy to perform the illegal deed which returns life to Fair Bride, and the elderly nun promptly marries the two lovers. The trio set out for the capital where Liu is to write his examinations. Summer is a blissful period for the newlyweds, but a rebellion in the south has delayed announcement of the examination results.

Autumn brings an order for Tribunate Tu to pacify the rebels; he sends Madam Tu and the household to the capital, but is himself besieged by rebels in Huai-an city. Meanwhile Tutor Ch'en, hurrying to alert the elder Tu of the scandalous exhumation, is captured by the rebels and freed on the condition that he convey to Tu false news of the death of Madam Tu and Spring Fragrance. The tragic news provides Tribunate Tu with a strategy which results in victory for the imperial forces. The delighted Emperor elevates Tu to the post of Prime Minster and appoints Ch'en as the Palace Announcer. The examination results confirm Liu as the first ranked scholar, and the capital is puzzled by the unknown whereabouts of the new literary champion.

In the interim Liu had rushed to the aid of the besieged Tu, only to find himself arrested at the victory banquet and charged with illegal exhumation; naturally the ever rational Tu has rejected the story of resurrection and Liu's claims to be his son-in-law. Meanwhile Madam Tu and Spring Fragrance on their journey to the capital have met upon Fair Bride in the deserted house which she was sharing with Liu. Oblivious to this ghostly reunion, Tribunate Tu extracted a confession from Liu and sentenced him to death, but he is soon rescued by imperial
officials sent to find the newly famous scholar. Still furious, Tu brings the crime to the Emperor's attention and all are summoned to the court for imperial judgement. Fortunately Fair Bride and Madam Tu appear in time to disclose the truth of the resurrection. With the aid of a magic mirror the Emperor discerns that Fair Bride is indeed alive again, and although the rationally stubborn Tu is reluctant to accept the verdict, his rancour is soon overcome by his love for Fair Bride. The play concludes with a joyous family reunion and reconciliation of all parties concerned.  

As will be shown, *The Peony Pavilion* is a revelation of man's unity with the perpetual renewal of the universe through the triumph of love over life and death, and the reconciliation of love and propriety, or rather the reunion of reason and passion, of the rational and the affectional. The playwright's operative device is the heroine's total devotion to love—the subject of her quest in life and dream, the cause of her death and resurrection, and the sustaining force of her reconciliation with the cosmos. T'ang attached supreme importance to love as the distinguishing feature of human existence, thus we read in the preface to *The Peony Pavilion*:

"Of all the girls in this world, who is ever so steadfast and committed to love as Fair Bride? Once dreaming of her love, she falls sick; and her illness becomes worse with her ever deeper attachment to love until she draws a self-portrait as a legacy to the world and then dies. Dead for three years, she can still in her limbo-like existence seek her dream-lover and regain her life. To be as Fair Bride is truly to be one totally devoted to affection. Love is of source unknown; but remaining true and totally committed to it, one may die of it and again come to life by its power. Love is not love at its fullest if one who lives is unwilling to die for it, or if it cannot restore to life one who has so died. Love engendered in a dream is not necessary to be unreal; there is no
lack of such dreamers in the world. Only for those whose love must be fulfilled on the pillow, and for whom affection deepens only as old age draws on, it is entirely a corporeal matter..."27

In a sense, this eloquent statement of T'ang's philosophy of love echoes Lo's existentialistic doctrine of identification of the mind with the generating force of life and the assimilation of the self with the incessant transformation of the cosmos. The Peony Pavilion is the playwright's postulation of love as the primary and essential condition of life, an affirmation of life consonant with Lo's philosophy that senses and sentiments are as natural as to bear the ultimate truth of the cosmos. T'ang postulates his drama of true affection in opposition to the decorous yet frigid life of the rationalistic Ming Confucians. Thus he perceives the futility of the rational mind in analyzing the depths of human affairs: "Alas, affairs of the world are certainly beyond mortal man's full understanding. With no omniscience, one can only strive to use 'reason' as a guide to his understanding; and yet what is without in 'reason' is never sure to be necessarily within 'affection'.28 He discerns that love as the truest and most spontaneous of human desires is an expression of true selfhood and the core of the universe, enabling one to indistinguish between the self and things, to discern reality and illusion, even to transcend life and death.

The Peony Pavilion is then beyond doubt a dramatic romance underscored by the cyclic myth with the affectional self at the thematic centre. In structure the play is closely correlate to the temporal progress of the seasonal cycle. It is the time of spring which provokes love's awakending in hero and heroine. While the conversion of the hero's name from "lover of spring" to "dreamer of the plum" indicates the rise
of desire and ambition in the planter of flowers and fruits after his oracular dream, spring stirs in the heroine a physical and mental awakening, a yearning for love which neither reason nor propriety can suppress. Her foray into the forbidden garden, symbolic of man's union with nature, marks the beginning of a search for selfhood in contact with nature, sense, and sentiment by means of the quest for love compelled by her revelatory dream. With the end of spring her love is unfulfilled in reality and paralyzed by decorum, and results in her extreme love-sickness.

While summer is the time when we would expect love to achieve fruition, Fair Bride's romantic difficulties create a tension between actuality and the seasonal expectation. This is reflected in her self-portrait, a static image of love, unfulfilled yet never changing. It is her legacy to the world. The tension is maintained through autumn when love should bear harvest. The disparity between the natural pattern of love which has been symbolically linked to seasonal progress, and the barren reality of the heroine's love-sickness is underscored by her declining health and eventually, death.

The descent of Fair Bride's soul into Hades and its three year imprisonment in Limbo is of course thematically consistent with the attributes of winter, the time of death and hibernation. With the return of spring, love and health are reborn in hero and heroine. Resurrection and reunion lead to marriage, and as love is given corporeality, the play's thematic action is again in harmony with the seasonal cycle.

With harmony re-established, summer corresponds to marriage and maturity, and autumn is allowed to generate its harvest of reunions progressing from dream to reality. Thus the mother-daughter reunion is undertaken through the former's ghost-like state of uncertainty and the
latter's death-like status of fugitive from the southern rebellion; the daughter-father reunion is fulfilled during the former's death-like faint, while the father-son-in-law reconciliation is completed only after the latter's literary success and an imperial verdict.

Indeed, the temporal progress and thematic structure of the play are in perfect accordance with the attributes of the Chinese cyclic myth: spring- birth or resurrection, summer- growth or attachment, autumn- ripeness or harvest, and winter- death and the potentiality of rebirth. It is even analogous to the symbolic forms of the seasons in King Wen's Eight Trigrams: spring- the arousing, summer- the clinging, autumn- the joyous, and winter- the abysmal.

Thematically speaking, the correlation of the play and the cyclic myth is furthered by the possibilities for transcendence in dream and death. To recall that at the heart of the myth is the relief of temporal tensions through union with natural cycle, is also to suggest the difficulty of the union within the linear constructs of human consciousness. Whether dreams are linear in the sense of recollection, or spatial and cyclical in the sense of Jung's "synchronicity", they certainly allow freedom of symbolic self-identification usually denied in waking consciousness. The dream in The Peony Pavilion are both naive and oracular; they are engendered through the unconscious wish-fulfillment of the unsatisfied self and are immediately the motives for the hero and heroine's incessant quests for love. The transcendability of dream over both time and the strict decorum of the censorious ego frees the heroine from all inhibitions and taboos to experience the fulfillment of love which through the spiritualization of dream is the only reality beyond past, present, and future.

Death and death-like fainted in the play are similarly revelatory.
They are spontaneously sleep-like deaths, circumscribed by the self-destiny of the persistent will of the questing heroine. Again the transcendability of death over time, decorum, and the rational enables the heroine as "a sleeping beauty" to be inanimate for three years yet spiritually to roam the world in quest for her love. Here death simplifies love into true humanity, and purifies love to an extreme absolute will, a vitality to die, to resurrect, and to reconcile.

While the resurrection of Fair Bride is the material demonstration of the power of love, it is above all the poetic truth of Lo Ju-fang's equation of love and humanity to life and vitality. The marriage is not only a union of questing selves but a fulfillment of perfect selfhood through love as the truest affection or humanity and the essence of the self's unity with the perpetual regeneration of the universe.

From a philosophical standpoint the real triumph of *The Peony Pavilion* is the perfect embodiment of the conflict between the heroine and her father; in other words the metaphysical dispute of the primacy of "Ch'ing" (as love, passion, affection) over "Li" (as reason or the rational principles which govern human conduct). Prefect Tu is a stern guardian of Confucian morality. His dedication to reason is a block to spontaneous affection and keeps him, as official rectifier of the course of spring and agriculture, remote from the actual soil the peasant tills or the back garden where nature prevails. Although the ritual aspects of the cyclic myth are so deeply engrained in Chinese culture that even such a rationalist as Tu is officially responsible for maintaining the harmony of Tao and agricultural practices, it is this same Confucian rationalism which negates the spiritual nourishment to be derived from such practices. Incapable of realizing the heroine's physical
and mental awakening and amor dedication, he refuses to acknowledge his daughter's resurrection and marriage until the very last scene of reunion.

Fair Bride as the incarnation of love initially rejects "Li" which suppresses her awakening to true selfhood and denies her subsequent personal fulfillment. Eventually she asserts her own desire and makes the supreme commitment to love in the decorum-free states of dream and death. Her incessant quest for love is first rewarded by Tutor Ch'ên's conversion from rationalist pedant to naive interpreter of love songs in The Classic of Poetry. The conversion is completed as he becomes the guardian of the heroine's grave and her champion against her father's rigidity. But the ultimate revelation of love's supremacy over reason occurs in the great reconciliation of the finale. Her love fulfilled in marriage sustains despite the lack of paternal approval until Tu's intransigence necessitates further action. She faints away in desperation of ever achieving reconciliation with her father; yet it is precisely by the force of affection shown in her death-like faint that the tyranny of the coldly rational over the spontaneous affection of the heart is overcome. Finally his whole-hearted acceptance heralds a true unity of mind and heart, a harmony of the rational and the affectional.

While the grand reunion and return to social harmony is but a traditional convention for the comic mode of the Ch'uan Ch'i school of Ming theatre, it must also be admitted that the convention is the perfect vehicle for T'ang's existentialistic concept of placing man's bodily self and affectional heart at the centre of the creative process. Through The Peony Pavilion he proclaims that the way to sagehood lies in the enlightenment of one's innermost nature, that love as the truest humanity is the fulfillment of one's true selfhood and is in contact with all
senses and sentiments, and the nature of all things. The work of T'ang Hsien-tsu demonstrates the informing power of the cyclic myth in Ming culture. As a structurally thematic pattern which underlies the dramatic action, it first establishes the tension of disparity between seasonal expectation, the cyclic way of nature, and grimly rational social reality, and then provides the thematic framework as love triumphs through death and dream. While the attainment of true selfhood in T'ang's drama assumes an existentialistic focus through the insight of Lo Ju-fang, harmony with nature is the ultimate aim. Whether through "Li" or "Ch'ing," the regeneration of man through perpetual renewal is the unchanging centre.

Han Tan Meng Chi

Turning now to the last of T'ang Hsien-tsu's dramatic works, Han Tan Chi (The Dream on A Pillow in Han Tan Inn), completed in 1601, we find his characteristic concern with the achievement of permanent contentment within human transcience viewed from a less romantic standpoint. Indeed in Han Tan Chi the life of sentiments is reduced to a dream of revelation.

The framing narrative of the play concerns Lu Shêng, whose life in terms of achievement must be regarded as a failure. Lu is visited by one of the Eight Taoist Immortals searching for a mortal whose mental detachment would render him suitable for menial tasks in the Immortal's homeland, the magical island Pêng-lai. Dissatisfied by Lu's plaintive confession of failure, the Immortal bids him to rest his head on a magic pillow. The porcelain pillow proves to be an instrument of secular wish-fulfillment and much of the play concerns Lu's amazing adventures while in the dream state. The Lu of dream marries into wealth, bribes his way to
bureaucratic and academic success, constructs a mighty canal through use of magic, is promoted to Vice Prime Minister for quelling a rebellion, and sentenced to death when it is discovered that he accepted a bribe from the rebel general. Granted a last minute reprieve, the exiled Lu is almost killed by a tiger and set upon by bandits; he is even devoured by a whale. After three years of exile new evidence exonerates Lu from previous charges, and he returns to the capital a hero, and soon, Prime Minister. Twenty years of distinguished service pass, and Lu retires to a regal estate to live his remaining years in licentious ease. His death in dream results in his awakening, and upon the Immortal's disclosure that his dream-wife is in reality a donkey, and his children but dogs and chickens, Lu replies:

"Reverend Sir, I, Lu Shêng, am now awakened. Our life and family ties are but like this. How could they pertain to the realm of reality? I have now completely realized the nature of life and death, and the principle lying behind our preordained glory and disgrace, gain and loss."

Finally satisfied with Lu's reply, the Immortal whisks the enlightened peasant to the divine abode where to sweep the fallen petals from the Sacred Peach Tree he is given a broom enscribed: "to sweep till there will be no petals, no ground, and no broom to become a sage to join the ultimate origin."

Adapted from Shên Chi-chi's (d. 781 A.D.) The World Inside the Pillow which in turn originated in the "Jade Pillow" story by Liu Yi-ch'ing (403-444 A.D.), Han Tan Chi is certainly a drama of quest and enlightenment. Yet the central notion of The Peony Pavilion, that love is the most intense
form of existence surpassing time and death, seems at first to be repudiated by the resignation and cynicism of Han Tan Chi.

Generally speaking, the structure of the play is analogous to C.G. Jung's archetype of transfiguration and reconciliation, and the archetype and initiation in myth and ritual. The initial quest, which contains the phases of the call to adventure, supernatural aid, the crossing of the threshold, and the belly of the whale, finds its satiric devices in the conventional pathos of Lu Shêng, the Confucian malcontent who is barely free from starvation yet eagerly striving for success and fame. No doubt there is also a pathetic element in the quest of the Taoist Immortal, Lü Tun-pin, who travels the world without finding his candidate distinguished by perfect mental detachment. The quest is almost futile until the two meet in Han Tan Inn. Commanding nearby spirits and animals to intrigue a dream of a materially successful life, the Immortal lulls Lu into his dream quest.

The pillow is hollow, and the hole within my be identified as the birthplace of subconscious desires, dream and death, even the womb and rebirth. Life in the dream world of the pillow suggests both wish-fulfillment and ordeal for Lu Shêng completes a libidinal marriage to Miss Ts'ui (as the earth-mother image and the goddess of wealth and fame), and endures the tests of extreme suffering typical of an initiating protagonist before enjoying the great accomplishments of the questing hero. Indeed the dream consists of extremes of glory and disgrace, blessing and disaster, and happiness and sorrow over a span of sixty years. This phase of transfiguration ends with the final reconciliation of the hero and the emperor- the atonement of the son with the father, which brings the hero to penultimate success and glory as a noble and contented lord.
The return is a great awakening. Having enjoyed great wealth, fame, and longevity, the hero leaves the phantasmagoric life without regret at the age of eighty, only to awake in this world as a farmer in torn sheepskin jacket in Han Tan Inn. The disparity between the two lives is the immediate cause of enlightenment. Having fulfilled his desires for sensuality, wealth, and fame in the transfigurative dream world, and realizing in retrospect the nature and the truth of a life of sentiments, the hero is reconciled with the Taoist Immortal. Atonement of the hero and the emperor (representative of father and sage images) is also the reconciliation of the young man and sage elements of Lu's own character. This apotheosis enables the young man to become master of the two worlds and bestows on him the freedom to live. The conversion of a Confucian malcontent to a wandering Taoist symbolizes a spiritual transcendence, an incessant pursuit for pure being, and even the cultivation necessary for the harmonious unity of self and cosmos.

Thematically the dream is apocalyptic. That the intransience of life is a central metaphorical concern is illustrated by the duration of the dream; despite sixty years of extreme success and imperial service in dream-time, in reality the duration was only the time required to cook a bowl of millet porridge. This phantasmal nature brings about a disillusionment with life whether it is regarded as affectional or rational. The dream's origin in the Immortal's intrigue and the vagueness of the hero's free will undermined by the Immortal's looming dictatorial shadow serve to undercut the hero as a legitimate seeker of self fulfillment. The hero's dream life then must be viewed not as a paradigm of the virtuous life but as a means to an end, to bring him the greatest possible contrast to ensure enlightenment. It would appear that the fuller the dream life,
the greater the contentment, and the prompter the enlightenment; for as T'ang writes, "where dream ends, awakening begins; and when affection is spent, enlightenment follows". It is in this connection that it may be said that T'ang Hsien-tsu did not suffer a radical change of attitude which induced him in his last play to look down upon "love" or any other human attachment; nor is Han Tan Chi to be regarded as worldly renunciation or escapism from the time-space world of sentiment. Rather, in the context that the truest humanity is the innermost affection, the core of selfhood, Han Tan Chi is to be understood as another level of T'ang's metaphysical speculation complementary to that of The Peony Pavilion. Here he perceives the attainment of pure being lies in the total detachment of the self from the world of sentiment consequent to the fullest experience of that sentimental life.

While mental detachment and unity of the self with the ultimate origin both require a true selfhood defined through T'ang's philosophy of love and being in The Peony Pavilion, the dream paradoxically serves as both the vehicle for the fullest experience of the life of sentiment and a metaphor of the transience and emptiness of life. At the conclusion of the play, vehicle and metaphor combine as a higher spiritual realization rather than a renunciation of life. The process is most analogous to the "sudden enlightenment" of the Ch'an or Zen school of Buddhism which professes the immediate and direct attainment of Buddhahood by anyone at any time and any place. Perhaps the oracle is to be understood in a Ch'an Buddhist sense: "to cultivate (sweep) till there will be no things or no object (no petals), no self and no subject (ground), and no means and no consciousness (no broom) to become a Buddha (a sage— one who is first with and then without selfhood) to join the ultimate origin". Thus
it seems clear that any perception of negativism is undermined by the playwright's existentialistic vision of the fusion of Taoist myth, the Confucian ethic of sentiments, and the Ch'an Buddhism oracle.

In comparing *The Peony Pavilion* to Han Tan Chi we have noted that the former demonstrates the path to true selfhood while the latter the path to enlightenment or Buddhahood once true selfhood has been attained. With regard to the representation of the cyclic myth both plays are united in their concern for the transcendence of linear human consciousness. Such temporal concerns are indeed the limitation of the human condition and a perennial subject in Chinese literature. While the seasonal pattern in *The Peony Pavilion* is perhaps more representative of the survival of periodic regeneration in Chinese drama, *Han Tan Chi* demonstrates an affinity in terms of ultimate unity. Where the spontaneous expression of love as human nature necessitates a harmony with natural cycle, that harmony is in turn transcended by the ultimate and original unity. That the drama of T'ang Hsien-tsu should provide such a model of transcendence in the human affairs of literature is one of the great achievements of Ming culture.
C. The Cyclic Myth in the Chinese Novel

Originating in the philosophical and historical writings of the earliest Chinese classics, Chinese fiction first flourished in the fourth to sixth centuries A.D. With the popularity of the supernatural tales common to Taoist and Buddhist religions, these shorter narratives often focused on myths, legends, and tales of the fantastic, although conversational pieces regarding ancient and contemporary celebrities were not unknown. But it was not until the T'ang dynasty (618-906 A.D.) with the introduction of the Ch'uan Ch'i genre that the narrative form shed its poetic excesses and interpolations and evolved an effective style based on less adorned prose and the frequent subject, tales of the marvellous. The stories of the T'ang dynasty paved the way for the vast scope of Sung fiction and the immense popularity of its practitioners. In the Sung dynasty (960-1279 A.D.) storytelling became an accepted profession, each bard specializing in one of four areas: tales of chivalry (often military) and litigation; the religious story popular in Buddhist sects; the historical recitation; and the realistic love-story often coupled with proficiency in tales of the supernatural. In the hands of Sung storytellers historical materials and literary fragments were expanded into complete stories, rich in detail and vivid description. This oral tradition was further refined and enriched by the Yuan dramatists in their plays. Thus there evolved in the course of time immensely popular story cycles which provided the subject matter for many of the earliest Chinese novels. By the last century of the Ming dynasty, fiction had become an established literary form among scholars and the populous middle class of the greater urban areas. With a sophisticated audience the colloquial short story reached the peak of its development with the publication of numerous collections in the first decades of the seventeenth
century. Meanwhile the Chinese novel was entering its "golden age", a period extending into the early twentieth century. Of the bulk of Chinese fiction in the past several centuries, six novels stand out as representative of the "story cycle" folk tradition or of an individual author's creative genius of these works (The Romance of the Three Kingdoms, The Water Margin, The Gold-Vase Plum, The Scholars, The Journey to the West, and The Dream of the Red Chamber) the latter two are most illustrative of the survival of the cyclic myth and worthy of further regard.

Hsi Yu Chi

The Journey to the West (Hsi Yu Chi) known to English readers as "Monkey" through Arthur Waley's abridged translation of 1942, is a combined product of the literary cycle of oral tradition, and the author's creative imagination. Through its five hundred years of evolution it had existed as a crude colloquial story, a poetic novella, and a six-part drama before Wu Ch'êng-ên (1500-1582) refined it into its present novelistic form. Generally speaking, The Journey to the West consists of four parts:

1. a myth of the divine birth, quest, and ultimate defeat of a stone monkey;

2. a pseudo-historical account of Monk Tripitaka's Oedipus-like life story and family reunion, before his pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain of Buddha;

3. a journey of eight-one ordeals undertaken by Tripitaka and his
three disciples—Monkey, Pigsy, and Sandy;

(4) the ultimate reconciliation of the pilgrims with the Infinite Buddha.

While the plot of the novel is wondrously complex, a general understanding of major incidents is prerequisite to understanding its structural basis within the cyclic myth. With this end in mind, we offer the following summary.

At the outset of the novel it is apparent that Monkey's miraculous birth has resulted in an innate knowledge of cosmic harmony, for he springs to life from the rock peak of the holy Mount Flower and Fruit which for centuries had received the spirits of Heaven and Earth, and sun and moon. Thus the hero's first action is a reverential bow to each of the four quarters of the universe. With his supernatural talents and abilities Monkey became King of monkeys, gibbons, and baboons, and ruled for several hundred years in the contentment of natural harmony. But a sudden awareness of life's transience and death's inevitability compelled Monkey to search for Buddhahood, the enlightenment which denies the dark kingdom of death.

Following an eight-year quest, Monkey arrives on the Western Continent and under the tutelage of a woodcutter is accepted as a Buddhist novitiate, and given the religious name, "Aware-of-Vacuity". Following seven years of study, Monkey is rewarded with the secrets of longevity and seventy-two magical transformations of which levitation over great distances proves to be the most important. Forbidden to mention his discipleship upon punishment of death, the hero leaves the Western Continent.

Returning to his homeland in time to free his subjects from the devastations of the Demon of Havoc, Monkey unites his "people" into an invincible army and is declared the greatest king of the animal and demonic
worlds. Searching for a weapon which befits his new status, he obtains from the Dragon King of the Eastern Sea an iron bar— "The Golden-Clasped Wishing Staff". The mighty weapon possesses cosmological significance as the leveller of ocean and river bottoms, and as the instrument used to fix the course of the Milky Way. With this magical staff at hand the hero accepts armor from rulers of the remaining three seas and returns to Mount Flower and Fruit.

After a great banquet Monkey is (in dream) carried by demons to the edge of the City of Darkness, but he awakes and recklessly confronts the Ten Judges of Death, demanding immortality for himself and all his subjects. Fearing that the granting of such a request would upset the harmony of Light and Dark, the Dragon King and the First Judge appeal to the Supremacy of Heaven to arrest Monkey. This military option is disregarded; instead Monkey is offered the immortal post of Supervisor of the Celestial Stables which he vainly accepts. Fifteen years pass before he is aware of the relatively low rank of his position, and in a rage he returns to his terrestrial kingdom. Thereupon a celestial army of spirits and gods was dispatched to arrest Monkey, but they were terribly defeated. In an effort to restore peace he is offered a new post, that of Great-Sage-In-Equal-Of-Heaven, which Monkey accepts and then returns to the celestial realm.

Our hero's appointment in Heaven is typified by several instances of reckless greed; guarding the Peach Trees of Immortal Divinity led him to devour many of the sacred fruits, and after intriguing his way into a celestial banquet, he consumed all the divine nectars and ambrosia laid out for the feast. Intoxicated on the fruits of his last misdeed, Monkey enters the palace of Lao Tzu, and swallows all five gourds of the elixir of life. Realizing his guilt he flees Heaven for the securities and
honours of his lower world.

Monkey's escapades so enraged the Supremacy of Heaven that all the forces of the universe were commanded against the mischievous protagonist, and he was finally defeated by the Diamond Snare of Lao Tzu and sentenced to death. Immune to the usual weapons and thunderbolts, Monkey was imprisoned in Lao Tzu's Crucible of the Eight Trigrams but he survived the alchemic fires through his knowledge of the nature and structure of the Crucible Trigram, and escaped to battle his way to the very doorstep of the Supremacy of Heaven. Finally the Buddha himself intervenes and Monkey is tricked into a moment of bewilderment, a moment which allows Buddha to imprison him under the cosmic mountain, Mount Five Elements, to do penance until rescued.

The ultimate defeat of Monkey concludes the first section of the novel, and the incidental detail provided suggest the encyclopedic nature of its cosmological references. Borrowing freely from the myths of antiquity, the religious lore of Buddhism and Taoism, and folklore of the original "stone monkey" story cycle, Wu Ch'êng-ên has fashioned a work which entertains as pure adventure, and instructs as religious allegory. With this cosmological framework in mind, and for brevity's sake, further events of the novel may be treated with less regard to incidental detail.

The second major section of The Journey to the West concerns the Oedipus-like biography of the monk, Tripitaka. Ch'ên Kuang-jui, literary champion of the Academic Examinations, was rewarded by an official post in the distant River Province and the hand of the Prime Minister's daughter. As the newlyweds were travelling towards their new home, Ch'ên was murdered by a jealous ferryman, Liu, who then posed as the newly appointed governor and obtained silence from Lady Ch'ên who was anxious to protect her unborn child. When a son was born, oracular advice prompted Lady Ch'ên to brand
the infant and send him downstream on a wooden plank with a letter of identification. The baby was discovered by an abbot and raised in a Buddhist temple, and at age seventeen was named Hsüan Tsang, literally "Great Obscurity". Setting off in quest of his origin, Hsüan Tsang eventually discovers the truth of his birth and dethrones the impostor. The grand reunion is completed with the appearance of his father, Ch'ên, who had been resurrected through divine intervention.

In the meantime events had occurred to set the stage for the third section of the novel. Perceiving the manifold suffering of those in the underworld, and upon his resurrection, Emperor T'ai Tsung has appointed Hsüan Tsang to preside over an Imperial General Mass for the Dead. Meanwhile the Buddhisattva of Mercy has been searching for a pious believer to deliver the Scripture of Tripitaka (by way of reformation) to the lustful and evil inhabitants of the Southern Continent. Inspecting the route the pilgrim will take, the Buddhisattva converted two monstrous incarnations to Buddhism—"Sandy" (in religion "Aware-of-Purity"); and "Pigsy" (in religion "Aware-of-Ability"); and bid them to assist the pilgrim's passage and offer assistance. In addition she arranged a pardon for the Dragon Prince of the Western Sea and transformed him into a white horse to bear the future pilgrim; and finally, Monkey was converted to Buddhism, re-named "Aware-of-Vacuity" and ordered to await the pilgrim's arrival when he would be released from Mount Five Elements to protect the pilgrim's westward progress. Eventually the Buddhisattva travels to the site of the Imperial General Mass and invests Hsüan Tsang as the bearer of the Great Vehicle of the Scripture of Tripitaka; henceforth Hsüan Tsang, the pilgrim, is to be known as "Tripitaka" and the journey begins.
Thus in the novel's third section Tripitaka is joined by Monkey, Pigsy, Sandy, and the Dragon Horse, besides encountering Zen Master Crow-Nest who bestows upon them the scriptures of the Heart Sutra as a spiritual companion on their journey. For the next fourteen years, through one hundred and eight thousand leagues of travel, the five pilgrims endure eighty-one ordeals of the divine as well as the demonic. Finally they cross the Sacred Water surrounding the Holy Mountain and the Buddha of the Infinite rewards them with the five thousand and forty-eight scrolls of the Great Vehicle of the True Tripitaka. The travellers and scrolls are escorted back to China on a puff of fragrant wind by the eight Vajrapanis (Diamond Angels), and each is rewarded through various celestial appointments as Buddhas in the cases of Monkey and Tripitaka, or as holy guardian in the cases of Pigsy, Sandy and Dragon Horse. In this manner is the fourth and final section concluded, and the great reconciliation fulfilled.

Quest and progress form the structural framework of The Journey to the West. We find Monkey's universal pursuit of immortality and Tripitaka's persistent search for his origins, both secular and divine; moreover the journey concerns spatial progress from the terrestrial to the celestial, and temporal progress, (in terms suggested by Eliade in Cosmos and History), from "profane time" to "great time" and finally to "no time", the time of reconciliation and the union of the pilgrims with the Infinite. In a spatial sense the novel is a divine comedy between the Heaven of celestial deities under the Jade Emperor of Taoism, the Western Paradise of Buddhist saints and arhats headed by the Buddha of the Infinite, the Underworld of Darkness where ghosts and souls are ruled by the Ten Judges of Death, the demonic world of monsters and goblins, and lastly, the terrestrial world of earthbound mortals.

Thematically speaking, whether the novel is regarded as a religious
or philosophical allegory, or as a mock epic, or even as a revolutionary satire of decadent bureaucracy, a popular view among Communist scholars, one cannot escape the surviving threads of the cyclic myth which provide the cosmogonic background and the individual impulse to quest in the first place. The temporal tensions which provoke Monkey's quest are no different from those experienced by Titan K'ua Fu several millennia before in the time of myth; what is different is Monkey's knowledge of cosmological harmony, the product of centuries of abstraction and evolution of the original cyclic myth.

As a religious allegory the explicitly Buddhist references in the novel are tempered by the prevailing syncretic spirit of Chinese philosophy; it must be remembered that *The Journey to the West* was composed from an oral tradition of story cycle in a time when idealistic Neo-Confucianism was dominant in Chinese life. The thought of Wang Yang-ming, which maintains that the mind is the universe in that things are nothing but what the mind determines to realize, and that sagehood lies immediately attainable within one's own nature, interpenetrates that of the school of Mahayana Buddhism so dear to the pilgrim, Hsuan Tsang. This emphasis on the primacy of mind has been noted in such traditional commentaries as Ch'în Yuan-chih's preface to a sixteenth century edition of the novel:

"There was an old preface which I read through... It held that Monkey was symbolizing the spirit of the mind, the horse was symbolizing the coursing of the desire or the will, and Pigsy was equivalent to the eight physical desires...As to monsters and demons, they were obstruction and illusion created by mouth, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind, fear, distortion and fantasy. They were given birth by the mind and were submissive to the mind. Therefore, in order to return to the Ultimate Origin where the mind yields to no allure or illusion, one has to regulate the mind to subdue monsters and..."
demons to restore truth."\(^3\!\!6\)
of every kind, and when the mind is at rest they disappear." 37

Tripitaka is the embodiment of the fearful self-consciousness of an everyman enslaved by the senses, by humanitarian affections, and by illusory external phenomena; he is too obsessed with the phenomenal being to fully perceive the transcendental meaning of the Heart Sutra and thus rout the terrors of the senses or detach himself from delusion. Every calamity which befalls him demonstrates anew his incomprehension of the philosophical issues at hand. On the other hand Monkey is "Aware-of-Vacuity"; he is the only one who comprehends the doctrine of emptiness and this accounts for his first action upon joining Tripitaka—the slaying of the six thieves of Eye, Ear, Nose, Tongue, Mind, and Body, an allegorical event indicative of his superior spiritual detachment. With his knowledge of the Heart Sutra, Monkey is able to discern various demonic delusions, is capable of numerous transformations, and free to roam the celestial and sub-terrestrial realms. He continually reminds his master to heed the teachings of the Sutra:

"Old master, you have forgotten the verse, 'no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind'. Of all of us who have forsaken the world, our eyes should not see color, our ears should not hear sound, our nose should not smell, our tongue should not taste, our body should not feel cold and heat, and our mind should not harbor vain illusions: this is known as 'routing the six thieves'. Now your mind is constantly occupied with the task of fetching the scriptures, you are afraid of the monsters and unwilling to give up your body, you beg for food and move your tongue, you are fond of sweet smells and provoke your nose, you listen to sounds and excite your ear, you see things around you and strain your pupils. Since you have welcomed these six thieves on your own invitation, how could you hope to see the Buddha in the Western Paradise?" 39
The thematic necessity of a full narration of eighty-one ordeals maintains Tripitaka's spiritual blindness for much of the novel. Fortunately the possibility of immediate enlightenment is one of the central tenets of Zen or Ch'an Buddhism, and Tripitaka is enlightened while crossing the Sacred Water to the Western Paradise. Spiritual transcendence is further indicated by the pilgrims' rapid and magical return to their homeland.

"In speaking of the return to homeland on a puff of fragrant wind it describes the ease with which the True Way may be attained. If men could with their power of sight first see through the affairs of the world, then suppress the Monkey of the Mind and the Horse of the Will, and again with wisdom govern their anger and subdue all evil spirits—what difficulty would there be in attaining the Way?"  

Certainly it would be inadequate to propose that The Journey to the West is merely a philosophical commentary on the Heart Sutra, and while the search for Nirvana is perfectly analogous to the transcendence of temporal tensions (the original motive of the cyclic myth), we shall find more complete correlations in the novel's anagogical and mythic aspects.

In its anagogical aspect, the novel bears in its food conceit a testimony to the primitive view of food as mana, possessing a 'spirit' which connects the divine and the profane, and confers special powers upon the partaker. Such sacred foods as the fruits of the Peach Garden, and the various ambrosias and elixirs of Paradise seem to be 'distillations' of the regenerative force which drives the seasonal cycles. It is no accident that in his search for immortality, many of Monkey's pranks involve the eating of such fruits and nectars. Much of the novel's initiating plot concerns the repercussions for universal harmony of a mere terrestrial
gaining access to such potent 'mana'. To restore the cosmic balance Monkey must be exiled from Heaven, and his quest for reconciliation with the divine must begin anew. In a more bizarre sense, the pilgrims themselves, especially Tripitaka, by virtue of their higher knowledge become 'mana' objects to their aggressors. Tripitaka must endure perpetual cannibalistic and sexual assaults by the male and female monsters who believe that to eat his flesh or absorb his semen is to acquire the precious gift of immortality. The monsters' ferocious aggression upon Tripitaka, and Monkey's incessant fight for the Fruit of Life in this view depict a vigorous quest for reconciliation and unity with the eternal divinity which has been the main theme of the cyclic myth since the beginning of time.

In its mythical aspects, the novel transcends a narrow religious application by the author's intentional fusion of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Not only do we find in Paradise geographical correlates to the Heavens of the three religious sects, but the Holy Mountain of Buddha is no less than the Cosmic Mount K'un Lun surrounded by circles of obstacles according to ancient Chinese mythology. In a mythic sense the 'journey to the west' seems to be less a Buddhist pilgrimage to India than a mythic progress to paradise or the cosmic mountain, in other words a quest for divinity and ultimate origin. Similarly the canonization of the pilgrims seems to be less a Buddhist approval than a heavenly sanction of their immortality.

Furthermore the previous states of the protagonists as exiled gods and banished immortals in penance on earth reinforces a mythic interpretation. On the one hand they suggest such Western mythical heroes as Prometheus, Oedipus, Moses, and Faust in their defiance of all authority
and their quest for knowledge; on the other hand they remind us of such Chinese mythical figures as the Titans Ch'ih Yu, K'ua Fu, P'êng Tsu, and even the Archer God Hou I with his shooting down of the nine suns, his exile to earth, and his ascent of Mount K'un Lun in search of the Pill of Divinity. In this connection the tale of Monkey's conscious upward striving from inanimate stone to animal shape with human intelligence, to the highest spiritual attainment is a typical embodiment of the fundamental subjects of the cyclic myth: the mortal self's bitter awareness of the ephemerality of life, its incessant quest for immortality through rebellion against divinity, and its eventual compromise and due reconciliation with the infinite. In its mythic implications the story of Monkey is not far from the ceremony of Chiao as a rite correspondent to the cosmic rhythm of eternal return, of the Feng Shan ritual of the emperor's thanksgiving sacrifice to the cosmic mountain as an imperial journey to the ultimate origin, or even the institution of Ming T'ang as terrestrial participation in the universal harmony.

Whereas The Peony Pavilion of T'ang Hsien-tsu emphasizes an existentialistic approach to the attainment of true selfhood through a life of utmost sense and sentiment in contact with the phenomenal world, Wu Ch'êng-ên prefers a merry tone of Rabelaisian mockery. Monkey is the image of the liveliest spirit of detachment. Wu Ch'êng-ên values this spirit above the cannibalism of the monsters (an image of the incessant craving for immortality), or the agonizing attachment of Pigsy as the image of the grosser sensual life, or even the spiritual blindness of Tripitaka despite his everyman quality of human compassion. Monkey is the comic image of man's intelligence, and the philosophical image of the doctrine of emptiness, capable of viewing himself and both terrestrial and celestial
worlds in the humourous light of his cosmic transcendence. In a word, according to Northrop Frye's theories, *The Journey to the West* is perfectly a 'comic story in the mythic mode.'

Hung Lou Meng

Our second novel for study completes the transition in the development of the Chinese novel from collective to individual authorship, and is regarded by many as the culmination of that development. Again referring to Frye's theories of classification, if *The Journey to the West* is to be considered a comic story in the mythic mode, *The Dream of the Red Chamber* is then a tragic story in the high mimetic mode. Its author, Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in (c. 1715-1763), has created a high tragedy of affection and self-realization concerning the passage of the hero from devoted attachment to self-conscious grief and eventually to bitter enlightenment and spiritual transcendence. Whether Oriental or Occidental, few works are its peers in the vastness of its length of one hundred and twenty chapters, the vividness of its narration over an encyclopedic range of description covering every aspect of Chinese custom and culture, and the subtlety of its portrayal of the more than four hundred characters. While the novel's great length and complexity prohibit a narrative summary, it is one of the most popular of Chinese novels in translation and we will assume some familiarity on the part of our readers.

To regard the novel from the viewpoint of mythopoesis is to discover a structure which recalls Robert Harrison's "quest" progression: a call to quest, an acceptance and descent to the underworld or the time of trials,
and a fulfillment of the quest and return in an apotheosized state. Given the novel's complexity, there are several parallel "calls to quest" which occur in both celestial and terrestrial realms. Celestially, it consists of the Sacred Stone's sorrow upon being rejected as a constituent of the Eternal Dome of Heaven, and his acceptance of a life in the terrestrial sphere. The earthly counterpart concerns the collapse of Chên Shih-yin's self-conscious indulgence in domestic bliss, and Chia Yü-ts'un's enthusiastic pursuit of worldly fame and wealth. The acceptance of these calls to quest demands both vertical descent and horizontal extension as the author weaves a journey to disillusionment through a terrestrial life of sense and sentiment for all the descending spirits. Horizontally, Ts'ao intrigues for both Chia and Chên a progress to ultimate enlightenment through the fragility and transience of illusory fame, wealth, and happiness. Continuing within Harrison's structure, the "descent" becomes the trials and ordeals undergone by man and immortal alike, while the "fulfillment" of the quest means a return for the descending spirits and a spiritual ascent for the earth-bound mortals. Finally, "enlightenment" is seen as disillusionment with domestic bliss and fame or wealth for Chên and Chia respectively, while it becomes the transcendence of sense and sentiment for the Stone and the affectional spirits.

On one level, The Dream of the Red Chamber concerns the Sacred Stone's eventual reconciliation with divinity through an ordeal of affection. The initial rejection of the Stone was caused by his excessive sentimentality, a fact supported by the "discard" of the Stone at the foot of Peak Greensickness—an onomatopoeic pun for the peak of "sentimental sickness". As a consequence, the Stone was granted terrestrial descent to be born in the Mansion of the Duke of Glory. At birth, the miniature inscribed crimson jade in his mouth seems to symbolize his spiritual essence of affection.
A group of passionate fairies and amorous spirits were also granted descent to be sisters and cousins to this most affectional hero, and later to join him in the Garden of Great Wonder to participate in the quest for a life of true affection. Much of the novel is then concerned with providing experience which would enable the Stone to free himself from his obsession with affection, to perceive the illusory nature of the life of the senses and sentiments, and finally to re-ascent to the spiritual world in an apotheosized state.

Discerning the symbolism of jade in the novel has been a favorite concern of scholars in the past centuries of criticism, (and the amount of scholarship is now truly awesome). Wang Kuo-wei, the first Chinese scholar to speculate that jade represents the desires of the self or the will of being, professes that The Dream of the Red Chamber is a postulation that the source of the suffering of life is the innate wish or desire immanent in human existence and that the only way to salvation is by self-decisive renouncement of desire. In fact, the elimination of desire and the liberation from attachment has always been a central feature of Chinese religious sects. Furthermore the Empirical School of Confucianism (1644-1912) maintained the necessity of renouncement of affection through the actual experience of involvement. In the Chinese novel, this empiricism inevitably demanded greater realism—detailed description and descriptive narration of everyman's domestic life of sense and sentiment in a vivid psychological context. It is this realistic compulsion which urged Ts'ao to write of personal experience in a striking confessional tone to capture its most intimate reality.

In order to establish the necessity of the renouncement of desire, it is most natural that the Sacred Stone should descend to the Mansion of
the Duke of Glory, and Pao-yü to the Garden of Great Wonder, for they are the most sentimental of beings in heaven and on earth respectively. In a sense their mutual descents represent the loss of celestial paradise and the fall of mankind, and reconciliation is possible only through a redemption of real involvement in life. The Illusion Land of the Great Void and its counterpart on earth, the Garden of Great Wonder, are literary devices necessary for integrating the structural application and thematic implication of the novel's empiricism. In the Garden, Pao-yü is just too devoted and too attached to comprehend the intimations of the symbolic scrolls and songs, or the illusory nature of his sexual initiation with Sweetheart, the incarnation of all beauty in the world. Perhaps the "fall" is all too willing, too human; the seduction simply justifies the empirical position that life can only be realized by plunging into the stream of being with full participation, and implies a sexual awakening in the life of the hero ready for the life of true affection in the paradise of beauties. The seduction is the first note in the fateful symphony which will expose the life of sense and sentiment as an abyss of illusion.

Pao-yü's greatest wish is to liberate his 'garden-girls' from the corruption of adulthood and marriage by his equal and enormous compassion and love for one and all and the idyllic life in the garden. Naturally this wish is severely undercut by the strong illusionality and impermanency of the Garden of Great Wonder. The illusionality resides in the analogy and superimposition with the Illusion Land of the Great Void, the dream life of the hero, the dwelling place of the Goddess of Disillusionment, and the final destination of the fairy girls in the garden. The impermanency lies in the steady encroachment of the 'real' outside world and the inevitable growth of the garden's inhabitants. Finally the emergence of the pornographic
embroidered purse reveals the entry of lust into the virgin paradise, and precipitates the loss of this temporary Eden through the calamities which follow. The sufferings of the hero must be manifold and miserable before he comes to realize the transience of life and indefinity of affection; spiritual enlightenment is symbolized by the mysterious loss of his inscribed jade, representative of the desires of the self. The loss of the crimson jade significantly implies a zenith of transcendence illustrated by the nadir of affectional insensibility and indifferent idiocy.

Beset with misfortunes, Pao-yü's evolving renunciation of affection is well illustrated by scholarly research into the onomatopoeic allusions of the protagonists' names. According to Tu Shih-chieh, 'Pao-yü' may be explicated as the 'stirring mind', 'Black Jade' as 'passionate desire' and the turmoil of the mind, and finally the most sensible and sensuous 'Precious Clasp' as 'wisdom' or mental tranquility. In this connection the travesty of the hero's marriage to Precious Clasp instead of Black Jade signifies a timely substitution of wisdom for affection. Furthermore the death of Black Jade heralds the elimination of desire presaged in the loss of the crimson jade.

Deprived of the desires of life yet remote from the truth of being, Pao-yü is ironically dying of the emptiness of existence, a notion reinforced by the confiscation of the two mansions and further deaths in the household. At his lowest ebb the hero is rescued by the reappearance of the mysterious monk, this time bearing the lost crimson jade. In dream Pao-yü is transported to the Bliss Land of Ultimate Truth, (significantly subtitled the Disillusion Land of Affection), where he is informed of his mythic origin as the Sacred Stone, reacquainted with the significance of the scrolls, and escorted to the company of the deceased Black Jade and the elevated
spirits of the other fairy girls from the ruined Garden of Great Wonder. Such revelations compel the hero's realization of the illusory nature of life and the afflictive nature of affectional attachment. Upon awakening, his enlightenment is signified by his desire to return the crimson jade to its sender, and his determination to sever all human ties and thus release himself from the obsessions of suffering. After restoring the mansions to honor, wealth, and power, and confirming Precious Clasp's pregnancy, with a rejoicing song of homecoming he retires into the white wilderness.

The sub-plot concerning the parallel quest of Chia Yü-ts'un is similarly resolved as Chia, the incessant seeker of fame and wealth once more deprived of official rank and honor, encounters his former patron, Chê'n Shih-yin, in his apotheosized state of divine ferryman. Here Chia is able to discern the epiphanic meaning of his encounters with Chê'n, the lifelong recluse and ferryman of true being. At last he perceives the truth of life revealed by the divine recluse in the myth of the Stone and the drama of the Garden of Great Wonder, and is able to sleep soundly in the little hut by the ferry.

The episodes of the mansion's restoration as the lingering temptation of fame or wealth, and Precious Clasp's pregnancy as the ultimate affectional seduction may be seen as literary devices which reinforce the tension of the tragic pathos of the hero's renunciation. They also imply the philosophical application that the utmost approach to Nirvana is the ultimate discard of whatever means by which it was brought forth. Thus either as an image of sensuous beauty and marital devotion, or as a metaphor of wisdom (a means to enlightenment), Precious Clasp's fate of desertion is necessary and inevitable as an affirmation of the hero's triumph over worldly attachments. It is in this connection that the Garden of Great Wonder may be
regarded as thematically equal (in an operative sense) to T'ang Hsien-tsu's dream world inside the pillow, and similarly that the conversion of Vanitas to Monk Amor as an expression of the novel's theme is identical to that of Wu Ch'êng-ên's Heart Sutra which professes that only in the quietude of mind and heart is Nirvana accessible.

Certainly the epilogue of Chia's enlightenment as an allegory of disenchantment with the ephemerality of fame and wealth is both a contrast and a complement to the mythic drama of the Sacred Stone as an allegory of disillusionment with affectional attachment. The testimony of the seeker and the recluse in the finale concerns neither their personal vicissitudes nor those of the Mansion or the Garden; rather the subject must be the flux and reflux of life as a whole. The epilogue of bitter realization and renunciation of being is paradoxically the prologue of the quest for non-being and reconciliation with the infinite.

The Dream of the Red Chamber reflects a particularly Buddhist view of concepts underlying the cyclic myth. One would expect that a life of harmony with cyclical nature would be the aim of life within the Garden of Great Wonder. But of course the Garden is established not so much as a metaphor of natural harmony but as a dream world wherein Pao-yü may pursue his ideal of unchanging self-conscious affection far from the everchanging mundane world. In as much as this precept ignores the cyclical impermanence of reality it is doomed to tragic failure. The transcendental solution depends upon the revelation that because reality is transient and ephemeral, human concerns must reflect the Tao which underlies that reality. Nirvana, or the unity of the self with the cosmos, must be consequent to the revelation of life's ephemerality. Ts'ao Hsüeh-Ch'üan's obvious fondness for his imaginative creation, the Garden of Great Wonder, implies the difficulties of the way to
transcendence. We would thus agree with C. T. Hsia that the author of The Dream of the Red Chamber is "a tragic artist caught between the nostalgia for, and the tormented determination to seek liberation from, the world of red dust". 46
D. Summary

Within the range of Chinese literature selected, whether as poetic contemplation, or dramatic manipulation, or novelistic philosophical postulation, aspects of the "cyclic" mentality continue to appear in an integrating fashion throughout the literature of China. Concerning the evolution of the cyclic myth, a general progression is evident: from the earliest mythical envisagement through ritual actualization to philosophical rationalization, and finally through various literary applications or expressions. Given the complexity of Chinese literary culture and the vagaries of historical scholarship the above evolutionary pattern should not be strictly interpreted in either a causal or limiting temporal sense; rather the pattern corresponds generally to the trend of increasing intellectuality of Chinese culture.

Our proposition that the cyclic myth has been a prime integrating factor throughout Chinese literature is reinforced by the continual reappearance of the following cyclic archetypes first suggested in the myths of antiquity.

(i) The image of the mountain as the cosmic mountain, Mount K'un Lun, the geographical link between divine and mundane consciousness. Such mountain images as the Southern Hill, Mount-to-Heaven, Mount-Flower-and-Fruit, Mount Holy Terrace-to-the-Heart, Mount Five Elements, the Holy Mountain of Buddha, and Mount Chaos all connote the symbolism of Mount K'un Lun as the cosmic mountain and the passageway to Heaven. As such it is the destination of the initiating protagonist and the questing hero who
would obtain reconciliation with divinity, cosmos, or infinitude. When the "mountain-quest" is undertaken in bad faith, punishment is typically an inversion of the above sequence, estrangement or banishment. Thus Monkey is exiled beneath the mountain, in this case Mount Five Elements.

(ii) The image of water as the cosmic water—the Sinking Water or the Lake of Purity. Such water images as the Sinking Sand bounding Earth from Heaven, the Sacred Water surrounding the Western Paradise of Buddha, the White Water, the Black Water, the Red Water, the Lo River, the River-to-Heaven, the Eastern Sea, and the Transmutation Lake-for-Dragons all connote either the Sinking Water as the sacred obstruction to the realm of immortality or the Lake of Purity as the water of life for the divine thirst or as the abode of the Supernal Mother Goddess. The attributions of death, life, purification, and immortality of this cosmic water are best illustrated by Tripitaka's exuviation in the bottomless boat upon his crossing the Sacred Water surrounding the Holy Mountain of Buddha.

(iii) The image of the garden as the garden of the Tree of Life—the Hanging Garden. Such images as the House of Spring, the Garden of the Sacred Peach, Mount Flower- and-Fruit, the cultivated garden of orchids, the self-contained farm on the Southern Hill, the garden of The Peony Pavilion, the garden of the Ts'ui, and the Garden of Great Wonder all connote the original Hanging
Garden with its attributes of natural beauty, its sacred fruits and divine boughs of the various trees of life, its nubile goddesses and beauties, life-sustaining foods, pastoral happiness, and paradisial bliss. Again, the Hanging Garden is the uppermost circle of Mount K'un Lun and is the site of the Tree of Life and the source of various divine ambrosias and magical nectars. Thus Monkey's role as hero of a cosmic quest is best explicated by the paradox of his being both the superintendent and the intruder of the Garden of the Sacred Peach.

(iv) The image of spring or autumn as the symbol of cosmic transformation. Images of seasons all connote the various phases of bio-metaphysical transformation consonant with the Myth of Divine Administration. And spring and autumn with their strikingly visible transitions are specified as symbols of the ephemerality of life and the transience of being. Thus the temporal structure of The Peony Pavilion determines its thematic structure, and the inevitable fall of the Garden of Great Wonder as the virgin land of ideal paradise is similarly foreshadowed. Its hostesses are termed the maids of spring, and their nomenclature prefigures the inevitable seasonal transition. In addition the enormous celestial army sent to arrest Monkey is composed of the cyclic powers of the time and space (including the four Gods of Season), and the unavoidable transition is again suggested.

(v) The image of the heroine as the Supernal Mother Goddess--Nü Wa or Hsi Wang Mu. Images of leading goddesses such as
the river nymph, the Goddess of Flowers, the Buddhisattva of Mercy, and the Goddess of Illusion; or leading heroines such as Fair Bride, Miss Ts'ui, Sweetheart, and Precious Clasp all connote the Supernal Mother Goddess who is also the Goddess of Marriage and is usually in charge of the sacred fruits and waters, and the elixir of life. This feminine image is hence the mate of the initiating protagonist or the patroness of the questing hero. Her function is essentially that of completion and is borne out by the inevitable pairing of yin and yang as the masculine and feminine principles in the earliest development of the *I Ching*.

(vi) **The image of the recluse** as the symbol of the diviner or the immortal. Images of recluses such as Wu Hsien, P'êng Hsien, Ling Féi, Taoist Lü, Patriarch Subuddhi, the Abbot of the Golden Mountain, Zen Master Crow-Nest, the mangy monk, the lame Taoist and Taoist Chên all connote the diviner who is the seer of ultimate truth and is hence the patron or guide of the hero in his time of trials. He is often the ferryman in the questing hero's final ascent to reconciliation.

(vii) **The images of dream and death, and the dream-world** as the symbol of descent and the symbol of the time of trial respectively. Images of dream-worlds such as T'ao Ch'ien's vision of the mundane world, the limbo of Fair Bride, the dream-world inside Lu Shêng's pillow, Tripitaka's illusory land of demons, and even the Garden of Great Wonder
to Pao-yü all connote a life of extraordinary sense and sentiment, in other words a trial which provokes a bitter realization of the transient and illusory nature of being. Similarly such death, dream, and exile images as Fair Bride's death, Lu Shêng's dream, Monkey's death, Emperor T'ai Tsung's death, Golden Cicada's exile, Monkey's fall into the Crucible of the Eight Trigrams or his imprisonment under Mount Five Elements, Pao-yü's dreams of the Illusion Land of Great Void, or his and other amorous spirits' exile all connote a descent into trail.

(viii) The image of awakening or resurrection as the symbol of the return of the questing hero in an apotheosized state. Such images of awakening and resurrection as Fair Bride's resurrection, Lu Shêng's awakening, Monkey's awakening, Emperor T'ai Tsung's resurrection and Pao-yü's awakening all connote the symbolic return of the hero in an apotheosized state. Frequently such returning heroes possess a divine ability or spiritual transcendence which enables them to achieve the final ascent to enlightenment. Thus Tripitaka's return on a puff of fragrant wind and Pao-yu's final recovery (or awakening) from illness and idiocy are allegorical in this respect.

(ix) The image of conversion or canonization as the symbol of the achieved ascent to reconciliation. Such images as Ch'ü Yüan's immortalization in universal roaming, T'ao Ch'ien's spiritual transcendence, Fair Bride's final resurrection and paternal reconciliation, Lu Shêng's
conversion into the immortal island, the canonization of Tripitaka and fellow pilgrims, Pao-yü's conversion to the recluse of Mount Chaos all connote the achievement of final reconciliation with divinity. This ultimate apotheosis is best delineated by Tripitaka's canonization as manifold reconcilement—the exiled god with divinity, the pilgrim with Buddha, and the individual with the cosmos.

The above recurring images essentially depict a mentality which looks inward and outward at the same time. With the severe nostalgic vision of alienation and exile it looks inward into a heterogeneous world of bio-cosmic estrangement; yet by assigning equal ontological reality to both microcosm and macrocosm and by affirming their mutual application, it looks outward to a world of universal wholeness. Such a mentality immediately transcends the boundaries of literature and philosophy, and of myth and ritual, and presents the primitive psyche attempting to satisfy a nostalgia for temporal duration and create a harmony of life and cosmos. If we consider the psyche which has created and recreated the cyclic myth through the forms discussed, certain symbolic phases become evident. Here we are not concerned with specific images from literature or concepts from philosophy so much as with a progressive scheme or pattern, symbolic in a general sense, which the Chinese mind has adopted and adapted in its search for reconciliation. Thus the cyclic envisagement consists of several 'symbolic' phases.

1.0. The tristia depicts a linear consciousness, an individual alienation, and a nostalgic desire for cyclic harmony. The tristia usually arises from a realization of the ephemerality of life, and the illusions of the world
of sense and sentiment, or from the temporal awareness of the finitude of man in his cosmic estrangement. It therefore arouses a desire for permanence within the everchanging cosmos and unity with a universal oneness which in turn motivates the cosmic quest.

2.0. The itineraria or cosmic quest delineates a temporal and spatial journey or progress from the 'profane time' of the terrestrial world to the 'great time' of the demonic or under-world, and finally to the 'no time' of the Celestial world. The progress may elaborate on such typical quest patterns as the search for the waters, fruits, and elixirs of life which guarantee cosmic perpetuity for the partaker; or an incessant pursuit of a goddess as mate to restore a balanced harmony of opposites; or a panoramic circuit of the universe, the conclusion of which provokes an apotheosis. The journey itself may elaborate either a descent to the ordeal land for purgation by trial, or an ascent to the hub of the universe and the abode of divinity for a sacred reconciliation.

2.1. The quest for a goddess elaborates upon an incessant pursuit of marital union or divine reconciliation with a legendary beauty, or a mysterious nymph or fairy goddess. All are representative of the Supernal Mother Goddess who is the patroness of marriage and of the fruits, waters, and elixirs of life. The token of love and proposal is often a fragrant blossom, a sacred stalk, or a divine branch of jasper leaf.
2.2. The symbolism of vegetable adornment and nutriment expresses a contagious and reflective insight into the interpenetration of human microcosm and natural macrocosm. It often concentrates on the 'mana' of food through the fruits and waters of immortality, or the sacred power of the golden bough (as fragrant blossom, or magic stalk, or divine leaf or branch). 47

3.0. The return of the hero depicts a fulfillment of the quest in terms of a resurrection from death, an awakening from dream, a renunciation of the mundane world, or a transit to the immortal realm. The return is made in an apotheosized state and in turn justifies the hero's final reconciliation with the cosmos.

4.0. The reconciliation expresses the actualization of the original wish-fulfillment. It may assume such forms as the reconciliation of a fallen god with the supremacy of ultimate divinity, of man with nature as a harmonious unity, of the pilgrim with Buddha, or the self with being as a spontaneous oneness. Reconciliation may be indicated by conversion, canonization, or transcendence; and its actualization elucidates a coherent application of the mutual relationship between man and god or universe. This integration is central to the homogeneity of Chinese culture.

As a whole the cyclic pattern delineates the psyche of estrangement and reintegration, between the fallen status and that to be restored, the
lost paradise and that to be regained, and the severed relationship and that to be reconciled. It is designed to soothe a linear consciousness and integrate the heterogeneous reality of life and being, and is evident in all the literary works selected above.

If myth is regarded as the lowest common denominator of cultural expression, or as a narrative pattern informed by the elemental drives and anxieties of the collective psyche then our elaboration of the Chinese cyclic myth bears many similarities to Robert Harrison's outline of the Western cyclic myth offered below:

"The cyclical myth may be described as a spiralling motion in which the hero experiences a descent (kathodos) and an ascent (anodos), emerging not at the point of outset, but at a higher level. The basic movements in this eccentric circle are: The Call to the Quest (for it is a quest, though not a Neo-Platonic one), Acceptance and Descent into the Underworld (time of trials), Fulfillment of the Quest, and Return, often apotheosized by some sort of sacred marriage."48

Our examination of the progression of myth, ritual, and philosophy and finally, literature has posited a homogeneous cyclic schema present in every sphere of human expression in Chinese culture. To the Chinese this is the concept of "T'ien Jen Ho I", the unity of man and cosmos. Further study will demonstrate how this concept stands as both contrast and complement to its Western counterpart.
Footnotes to the Cyclic Myth in Chinese Literature


2. David Hawkes, "The Quest of Goddess", in *Asia Major*, XIII: 1, 2 (1967), 82.

3. David Hawkes, trans., *Ch'u Tz'u: The Songs of the South* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), pp. 21-34. I have varied the structure slightly from this translation, as provided in Appendix IV, i.


   Also cf. Appendix III, xiv for the Myth of Hsi Wang Mu.

   Also cf. Appendix III, viii for the Myth of Ch'ung.
   Also cf. Appendix III, xv for the Myth of Chii Mang.

10. Tai Chên, "Ch'iü Yüan Fu Chu" (Commentary on Ch'iü Yüan's Poetry) in *Ch'u Tz'u Ssu Chung* (Hong Kong: Kuang Chih Press, 1959), I, 8.


   Also cf. Lee Chia-yen, "Ch'iü Yüan Li Sao Ssu Hsiang Hê Yi Shu" (The Thought and Art of Li Sao by Ch'iü Yüan) in *Ch'u Tz'u Yen Chiu Lun Wên Chi* (Chuang Kuo Yu Wên Press, 1969), II, 62.

15. Again a primitive universality is supported by similarities to such Jungian archetypes as the heroic quest for the "anima".

16. Further discussion of the Romance elements in "Li Sao" may be found in Yeh Shan, "Yi Shih Yu Chuei Ch'iu" (Emblem and Quest), in Ch'un Wên Hsüeh (The Pure Literature Monthly), 3:6 (Taipei: Ch'un Wên Hsüeh Press, 1968), 52-53.

17. For further information on the poets cited:

   Also David Hawkes, op. cit., p. 82.

   Ssu-Ma Hsiang-ju: Lin, op. cit., p. 76.
   Also Hawkes, op. cit., pp. 87-88.

   Ts'ao Chih: Lin, op. cit., p. 87-89.

   Kuo P'u: Ibid., p. 105

   Also cf. Lin Wên-yüeh, "Ch'ung Yu Hsien Shih Tao Shan Shui Shih" (From the Poetry of the Quest of Gods to the Poetry of Mountain and Water), in CWWH, 1:9 (1973, Taipei), 709-22.


23. Ibid., p. 50.

24. Ibid., p. 140.


26. This synopsis of the play is adapted from: T'ang Hsien-tsu, Mu Tan T'ing (The Peony Pavilion) (Taipei: Wên Kuang Press, 1974).


30. Ibid., scene 30.


Also cf. Lin Wên-kêng, op. cit., p. 326.


34. Wu Ch'êng-ên (1500-1582). Biographical details are sketchy, but he is believed to have been a native of Huai-an in Kiangsu province, and to have had no successful official career except as a minor district magistrate for seven years; this, despite the fact that he was a learned Confucian enjoying a wide reputation for his wit and literary talent. He is said to have composed The Journey to the West at the age of sixty-eight and to have followed the existent story cycle of folk tradition. A volume of classical poetry and prose left by him has been edited by Miss Hsiu-yeh Liu, with valuable biographical and bibliographical information. Liu Hsiu-yeh, Wu Ch'êng-ên Shih Wên Chi (An Anthology of Wu Ch'êng-ên's Poetry and Prose) (Shanghai: Ku T'ien Wên Hsüeh Press, 1958).


40. Glen Dudbridge, op. cit., p. 172.


42. Few biographical facts about Ts'ao Hsiêh-ch'in are available, except that he was the scion of a wealthy Manchu family which in his early youth became impoverished through political reverses. At the age of thirteen, Ts'ao Hsiêh-ch'in moved to Peking with his parents who, despite reduced circumstances, maintained their connections with the Manchu aristocracy. With the ascent of Emperor Ch'ien-lung in 1736, the family briefly regained favour, but by 1744 unknown disasters had again ensnared Ts'ao in direst poverty. It was during this period that Ts'ao began composing his reflections upon his aristocratic youth and philosophical speculations into the enormous tapestry of "The Story of the Stone", or The Dream of the Red Chamber. Completion of the work occupied the next ten years, and he died in February, 1763.

The Following editions are most frequently cited:


47. Although the Chinese myth of the golden bough is unsubstantiated, apparent fragments are to be found in the ancient classics. Thus the proverbial phrase that a beauty's genesis is of "the golden bough and the jasper leaf" must be more than figurative speech.

IV

THE CYCLIC MYTH

IN WESTERN LITERATURE
A. Historical Background

We have maintained that one of the great characteristics of Chinese literature is its ongoing reflection of a homogeneous culture circumscribed by the concepts and patterns of the original cyclic myth. Beginning our comparative study of its Western counterpart, one is cautioned not to expect the immediate philosophical opposition suggested by Rudyard Kipling's infamous "East-West" quote. In fact the precepts of comparative mythology would suggest that archaic Western man shared many archetypal insights with archaic Eastern man. The myth of the eternal return if not universal is at least common among ancient mentalities. The cyclical speculations of Plato's *Politicus*, the Iranian *Darhat*, and pre-Messianic Judaism are not far removed from the temporal concerns of primitive man, whether he resides in the valleys of the Euphrates or the Yangtze. Archaic man, whether Oriental or Occidental, through the repetition of paradigmatic gestures and periodic ceremonies, succeeded in conquering the inherent estrangement of linear consciousness and lived in harmony with the cosmic rhythms. Assuming the importance of periodic regeneration in most primitive cultures (and its consequent refinement in Chinese culture), what we must account for is the development in Judaeo-Christian culture of the notion of finite time, a fragment (though itself also cyclical) between two atemporal eternities.

Obviously no account of the survival of the cyclic myth in Western culture would be complete without some mention of the forces which brought about the radical shift suggested above. To begin, the extent to which the developing Hebrew faith conceived of man's relationship to divinity rather than his identity with that divinity is the earliest measure of the "finite" temporal sense. In the centuries following the decline of Sumerian civilization, more or less continual persecution resulted in the formation
of a tribal religion unique in its insularity. Jeremiah and Ezekiel seem to have invented the idea that all religions except one are false, and that the Lord punishes idolatry. Meanwhile destruction of the Temple ensured that Judaism would become non-sacrificial with regard to ritual, a marked departure from the practices of contemporary and competing faiths. In time a theology evolved in which man had been created not to enjoy divinity but to know, honour, and serve it. Once this existential focus had been codified in the biblical trails of Job and the sacrifices of Abraham, reconciliation with divinity lost its immediate possibility, (so common in Chinese theology), and became more future oriented. The consequent mythology developed away from the notion of periodic regeneration and towards a progressive temporally oriented worldview of a creation, once and for all, at the beginning of time, a subsequent fall from grace, and a continuing restoration. The world no longer was to be experienced as divinity operative through cosmic rhythms; rather it became a field of cosmic conflict between two powers, one light and one dark. Finally, as Richard Needham indicated in his brilliant Time and Eastern Man, the consequences of Hebraic Messianism included a radical view of time and history.

"The Hebrews were the first Westerners to give a value to time, the first to see a theophany, an epiphany, in time's record of events. For Christian thought the whole of history was structured around a centre, a temporal mid-point, the historicity of the life of Christ, and extended from the Creation through the covenant of Abraham to the second coming of Christ, the messianic millennium and the end of the world."1

The Messianism of the Hebraic, and consequently the Christian faith, assumes on a higher plane the eschatological role of the king as representing divinity on earth. In accordance with archaic belief his chief mission was
the periodical regeneration of all nature. The trials of the Hebrew prophets suggest what is manifest in the life of Jesus—that victory, according to the ancient scenarios, was always finally the king's. The crucial difference is that now this victory occurs not annually but is projected into a Messianic future. Moreover, through the terrible visions of the prophets and the promise of future victory, historical catastrophes were construed as Yahweh's wrath and acquired meaning as revelations or concrete expressions of the same single divine will. Historical facts thus become "situations" of man in respect to God and history itself is seen as the ephiphany of God. Such a stern vision was naturally difficult for the elite to inculcate in times of prosperity, and the history of Hebraism is marked by many returns to such Paleo-Oriental divinities as Baal and Astarte in the absence of calamity.

As this essentially linear view of time and history was inherited by Christianity and firmly codified by St. Augustine, Western temporal attitudes became fixed in the linear pattern stressed by Henri-Charles Puech:

"A straight line traces the course of humanity from initial Fall to final Redemption. And the meaning of this history is unique, because the Incarnation is a unique fact. Indeed as Chapter 9 of the Epistle to the Hebrews and I Peter 3:18 emphasize, Christ died for our sins once only, once for all; it is not an event subject to repetition, which can be reproduced several times. The development of history is thus governed and oriented by a unique fact, a fact that stands entirely alone. Consequently the destiny of all mankind, together with the individual destiny of each one of us, are both likewise played out once, once for all, in a concrete and irreplaceable time which is that of history and life."2

Of course the original myth of the eternal return could not be utterly replaced by the linear approach of Judaeo-Christian orthodoxy. The
mnemonic power of primal archetypes and the immediate accessibility of natural cycle to an agricultural society ensured the survival of the cyclic myth. In fact as Mircea Eliade so ably demonstrates in his *Cosmos and History*, cyclic speculation still occupied a prominent role for primitive and intellectual alike well into the seventeenth century. Even within Christianity cyclic naturalism thrives in cosmological symbolism which bears remarkable similarities to the Oriental structures previously discussed.

According to the archetypal symbolism of the centre, Paradise or Eden is situated at the centre of the cosmos; it was on this site that Adam was created, and the same spot where the Cross of Christ was erected. This sacred mountain, where Heaven and Earth meet, is the Axis Mundi where the Tree of Knowledge once stood. In the myth of Eden the Tree stands in the centre of the Garden, at the source of the four rivers which metaphorically "water the garden". Eden is not only the mirror of Heavenly above: it is also a reflection of Christ, wherein all the events of Man's Redemption are seen in reverse. Over against the Tree of Knowledge, from which comes death, is the Tree of the Cross, from which came eternal life. One is reminded of the myth which identifies the wood of the cross with a staff or beam taken from the Tree of Eden. In this manner Christianity weaves a web of symbolic correspondences reminiscent of the abstracting tendencies of M'ing Tang, the Yin-Yang School, and especially the myth of Mount K'un Lun in Chinese thought.

The most significant survival of the cyclic myth in Christianity concerns the cycle of the Christian liturgical year. This religious calendar commemorates, in the space of a year, all the cosmogonic phases observed by archaic man, yet combines these phases within the Christian
framework of the birth, death, and resurrection of the Son. In a sense the sacred year ceaselessly repeats the Creation; Man becomes contemporary with cosmogony as ritual projects him into the "great time" of the beginning. With this cyclic liturgy in mind, Alan Watts suggests a scheme of pagan correspondences:

"The seasons of the year are themselves transformed from the pagan Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter to the Christian Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Passiontide, Easter, and Pentecost. However, because the sun itself is seen as a type of Christ, the Sun of Justice, the Christian Year is rather significantly integrated with the cycle of the sun. The Christian Year begins four weeks before Christmas, which coincides approximately with the Winter Solstice—the time when, in the Northern Hemisphere, the sun is at its lowest meridian and is about to begin once more its upward journey to the midheaven. Anciently, this time was sometimes known as the Birth of the Sun, being as it were, the midnight of the year, from which point the sun begins to rise. According to tradition, then, Christ was born at midnight at the Winter Solstice."4

This pattern of correspondence could be extended into greater detail. For example the Pentecost, fifty days after the Passover, was originally the Jewish Feast of the Weeks, the celebration of fruition and harvest. The Passover also celebrates the deliverance from Egypt and with the harvest imagery, Christ is often referred to as the "first fruit" of the New Creation. The first to rise from the dead rises in the very season when the buried grain first rises to fruition. Generally, in the cycle of the Christian year the rites of the Incarnation are governed by the solar calendar, since they are connected with the birth of the sun and fall upon fixed dates: on the other hand the rites of Atonement, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension are governed by the lunar calendar, the images of Death and Resurrection finding their natural counterpart in the waning and waxing of the moon.
If the cyclic myths of Christianity and China can be said to have spatial form, then the figurers of the circle and the spiral respectively would be their images. What is most crucial is the relative emphasis on periodic regeneration in each schema: while the very heart of the Chinese cyclic myth is the ever recurring natural cycle whose principle is the Tao which provides liberation from the anguish temporality of linear consciousness; in the Christian format, at the heart we find the paradigmatic life of Christ, cyclic through birth and resurrection, yet not periodic because of the historicity of his life. To repeat Puech, the birth and death of Christ are not subject to repetition, they are historical events. Thus despite the cyclic symbolism of the liturgical year and the manifold efforts of both folk and clergy to perceive natural correspondences, Christianity remains essentially a faith of linear eschatology.
B. A Brief Survey of the Survival of the Cyclic Myth in Western Literature

As we turn to study the Western literary view of the cyclic myth, it must be pointed out that although the ideal of Christianity is a linear eschatology, in practice the cyclic elements receive prominence in relation to the orthodoxy of the practitioner. Thus the thought of Augustine, a member of the orthodox elite, is far more "linear" in its intentions than that of any of the countless heterodox laity of Catholicism. One would be more correct in maintaining that the Middle Ages were dominated by the eschatological conception of the end of the world, complemented by the theories of cyclic undulation which explained the periodic return of events. The survival of archaic rites of periodic regeneration no doubt provided a sense of certainty to moderate the unrelieved misery of the era. Recalling that Christian dogma maintained that nothing of value was possible in the sublunary world except the steadfast virtue which would lead, in the end, to eternal bliss, it is not surprising that vegetative rites and superstitions should survive in lore and practice.

By the fourth century A.D. the Hellenistic melting pot of barbarian myths and mystery religions had been given "philosophical sanction" by the efforts of the Neo-Platonists, primarily Plotinus. For Christianity, the Neo-Platonic influence entailed a separation of historical event and metaphysical element in favour of the latter. Popularly a vulgar spiritualism replaced the historicity of Christ, and engendered (in Erich Auerbach's words), "a rather dismal sort of erudition; elements of astrology, mystical doctrine, Neo-Platonism, strangely distorted in the vulgar mind, were summoned up in support of this reinterpretation of events, and an abstruse art of allegorical exegesis was born". Despite this
climate of allegorical excess, where every object and event of historical Christianity could be endowed with a "meaning" through importation of natural and mythological symbolism, the literal reality of Christ's life and the transcendent meaning of his love survived. Toward the end of the first millennium dogmatic allegory had been replaced by a spiritualization of the mundane world from its greatest political developments to its least consequential daily affairs. Medieval man had discovered his intensely personal role in the drama of salvation and an individual fate that was decisive for all eternity. Paradoxically the development of allegory and mimesis, the latter superceding the former, ensured the survival of cyclic symbolism; reality could be presented as the operative sphere of the triune divinity wherein the archetypes of natural cycle and mythological quest were subsumed. Thus although Dante was the first master of mimesis of secular Christian reality, he was also an encyclopedic symbolist in the exegetical tradition.

While both mimetic and allegorical attitudes in The Commedia are indicated in Dante's famous letter to Can Grande, and further developed as the "fourfold method" of symbolic interpretation, the poet does not mention that this is also the story of the pilgrim's own growth and development, his quest for enlightenment. Indeed the progress of the narrator parallels the cyclic myth of the hero in its four major phases: the tristia—wherein the poet discovers his alienation and spiritual estrangement in the "dark wood"; the itineraria—wherein he progresses through both descent to the land of ordeals and ascent to the hub of the universe; the return of the hero—wherein Dante "returns" to wholeness, fulfilling the sub-quest for the goddess (Beatrice) and achieving apotheosis through an intellectual comprehension of God; and finally, reconciliation—
wherein the poet-hero achieves the state of ecstasy necessary for his intuitive apprehension of God. In the course of the journey the soul descends into its own depths knowing that these depths are also those of the created world. Dante's mythopoeisis is most clearly shown in his various encounters with the monstrous apparitions which bar his path and guard the way to the Tree of Life (or Knowledge). Encounters with the lion, leopard, and she-wolf, and Minos, Cerberus, Pluto, the Gorgon with her Furies, the Minotaur, Geryon, and the figure of Lucifer himself link the story of Dante's descent into Hell not only with the death and resurrection of Christ and his victory over the Devil, but also with the myths of the great classical heroes—Hercules, Theseus, Perseus, and the myth of the rape and rescue of Proserpina. Such mythologizing reinforces the quest aspect of The Commedia, and establishes structural use of the cyclic myth as governing pattern.

In his monumental analysis, Dante: Poet of the Secular World, Auerbach discerns The Commedia's structure to be three great interwoven systems, physical, ethical, and histori-political. The physical system consists in the Ptolemaic order of the universe adapted to Christian dogma by Christian Aristotelianism, and accounts for the geographical outline of reality, and the extension of Being from the "Primum Mobile" through all created beings to man who occupies a special position through exercise of free will. The second or ethical system generally follows Thomist ethics and is responsible for the complex hierarchies of Hell and Purgatory. For example, the terraces of Purgatory are subdivided according to the nature of the love that must be rectified in the individual penitent. Finally within the histori-political system are contained the interpenetrating histories of the creation and fall of man and the Roman Empire, and the
world-renewal myths of the Near East alluded to previously. Here we are most concerned with the "physical" system of Dante's world in its cyclic aspects, best demonstrated by examining the diagrams offered below. 8
Dante's Cosmos

GOD

PRIMUM MOBILE - ANGELIC CHOIRS

FIXED STARS the TRIUMPHANT

SATURN the CONTEMPLATIVE

JUPITER the JUST

MARS the MILITANT

SUN the WISE

VENUS the AMOROUS

MERCURY the ACTIVE

MOON the INCONSTANT

VENUS - Purgatory

HEAVEN - Jerusalem

WOOD - Hell

VESTIBULE

1st CIRCLE - Limbo

2nd CIRCLE - The Lustful

3rd CIRCLE - The Gluttonous

4th CIRCLE - The Avaricious and Prodigal

5th CIRCLE - The Wrathful

6th CIRCLE - The Heretical

7th CIRCLE - The Violent

THE ABYSS (Geryon)

Panders and Seducers

Flatterers

Sorcerers

Sorceresses

Grafters

Hypocrites

Thieves

False Counselors

Sowers of Discord

Counterfeiters

GIANTS' WELL

Traitors

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According to these static representations, the spatial type of Dante's world is the circle (of which more will be said later) but dynamic progress through these circles takes the form of a spiral. In the "Inferno" Dante moves in a narrowing leftward spiral to the centre of the earth-sphere where he overcomes Lucifer. From this negative centre the direction of the spiral is reversed, and in the "Purgatorio" it ascends. Again it is an inward progression to a positive centre represented by the Tree reaching up to Heaven, or the fountain flowing from divine will. In the "Paradise" the movement is apparently outwards until the sight of God as an infinitesimal point of light in Canto XXVIII; then everything is turned inside out and the heavens appear as wheels conceived the spiral to represent the relationship between the centre and the circle: through the cyclic interplay of the Holy Trinity God's love is reflected in the circular motion of celestial bodies, while man's progress to the centre reproduces this pattern in reverse.

Dante was meticulous in locating the action of The Commedia in real time, again in a cyclic fashion. The pilgrim's journey from Hell to the Empyrean takes seven days—Easter Week, the most important in the Christian calendar. He enters the Gate of Hell on Good Friday, leaves Hell on Easter Sunday, and the journey through Purgatory and Paradise ends on Easter Thursday to complete the circle. In another sense the poet's quest may be said to follow the seasonal cycle. Beginning in the dark wood, the dying world of autumn, he descends to encounter Satan in the icy cold of winter; spring, the ascent phase, is represented in his reunion with Beatrice, and summer with its light and warmth is seen in the poet's Empyrean enlightenment. In this manner Dante defines his cosmology within the natural cycle, a process which is unifying in structure and
universalizing in theme.

Apart from these structural uses of the cyclic myth, Dante further grounds his poem thematically in the allegorical traditions of natural symbolism, most notably in his use of solar, pastoral, and lunar or water imagery. In encyclopedic detail Helen Flanders has traced how the syncretism of the first centuries after Christ resulted in a solar pantheism, a trinity of life, light, and heat which became the triune Sun of the "Paradise". Whether or not Dante's use of solar imagery is a consequence of the assimilation of Mithraism by early Christianity, there can be no doubt of his emphasis on the cyclic aspects of the sun as the image of the rebirth of the Son. In the second canto of the "Purgatorio" the sun rises from the ocean marking the dawning of Easter Day. The sun is of course Christ, the Son, risen in Dante's heart and lighting his way. From this point on, Virgil is more of a companion; the real guide is the light of the sun and its movement around the earth.

The vegetative cycle finds a unique application in the Christian framework of the Commedia. Initially we find the poet in the tangled dark wood, symbolic of the sin inherent in nature and man after the Fall. The final terrace of Purgatory presents the dark forest healed and restored to order and fruitfulness—it is the Earthly Paradise, and suggests Eden, the archetypal garden. In Christian lore, prelapsarian Eden was a virtually static paradise, knowing neither seasonal cycle nor climatic excess, (a static concept quite foreign to the Chinese mind with its dynamic and centripetal status of natural cycle). While Dante's Paradise is indeed a place of perpetually temperate climate, perhaps owing to the infusion of Near Eastern fertility symbolism in the early development of Christianity he also views Paradise within natural cycle; it is the place from which the
seeds of vegetable life in the world below proceed, and to which they return. Yet the progress of the poet from sin to grace does not involve participation in the regenerative flux of nature (as in the Tree of Knowledge blooming in the company of Beatrice and the griffin) is an allegorical indication of his progress, not so much a "cause" as a "correlate". In many respects the Christian worldview regards divinity in control of nature rather than revealed through nature. The garden archetype is seen as the conscious image of nature before the Fall; it exists to remind man of his lost innocence and the ordinary manifestation of God's will in prelapsarian nature. In essence, as one approaches divinity, the image of Paradise may be seen as allegorically static, rather than naturally cyclic.

Turning from Dante's use of the cyclic aspects of natural symbolism to those of abstract symbolism the reader is immediately struck by the importance of the circle image to the Commedia. The turning spheres within spheres, the mandala image of the Rose unfolding, the luminous globe of the sun, the Trinity as three interpenetrating circles of different colours, and of course, the poet's own circular or spiral progress: all are testaments to the power of the circular image to the medieval mind. The most insightful analysis of the metaphysical significance of the circle is undoubtably Georges Poulet's "The Metamorphosis of the Circle". Concerning himself with Dante, Poulet demonstrates the ontological basis of the circle:

"Eternity is not simply the pivot around which time turns; it is also that point where, like the rays of the circle, the events of the past and the future converge and unite in the consciousness of God...Heaven, all nature, the whole of creation in its spatial and temporal unfolding, have existence only because everywhere and always the action from a creative centre causes them to exist. Doubtless this creative action is essentially spatial, since every place in the universe is at the receiving end of the
action. But it is also temporal, since every new moment is also the effect of this continuous creation. God possesses time not solely by His omniscience, but also by His omnipotence. 10

In simpler terms, God is a sphere of which the centre is everywhere and the circumference is nowhere. The divine concourse of the Holy Trinity is essentially a cyclic interplay which underpins the created universe and moves in ever widening circles through the universe as continuous creation. For Dante, swift motion, regularly circling like the sun, is a symbol of delight which lies beyond intellectual comprehension. Significantly, the penultimate image of the "Paradiso" is that of the conundrum of man attempting to square the circle, in other words, of equating the earthly (the square) and the heavenly (the circle). The solution is not geometrical but transcendental: the two are indeed one, united "by the love that moves the Sun and the other stars". The circle is then the metaphor of God as eternity, and the paradigm of the transmission of His divine love in continuous creation.

To conclude our brief excursion into the medieval world of the Commedia, we find the cyclic myth well represented in its mythopoeic aspect as the pattern of the quest of the hero. Without radical difference from the Chinese pattern, the poet-hero progresses from tristia, through itineraria, apotheosis, and finally to reconciliation. It is within the cosmological and existential aspects of the cyclic myth that distinguishing features emerge. Whereas the Chinese cosmos is ideally a cyclic harmony of divinity, man, and nature in accordance with the Tao, the Christian universe is hierarchical. God is the transcendent cause which from without preserves his creatures and their individual and continuing existences. Divinity is an "otherness", albeit the support of man and nature through continuous
creation, but an "otherness" which maintains the separate identities of man and nature. Certainly Dante's triune divinity is essentially cyclic but in a sense above and beyond the created world. The Chinese cyclic myth posits the immanence of divinity in nature which is immediately accessible to the seeker of divine reconciliation. Medieval Christianity knows no such immanence in scholastic doctrine, and the historical influence of the more naturally cyclic Near Eastern cults seem to suggest the reluctance of early converts to accept the estrangement of divinity from nature, and eventually nature from man. It remained for John Milton, several centuries later, to plumb the psychological intricacies of this hierarchical arrangement as it survived in the mind of seventeenth century Puritanism; but first we must outline the existential revelations of Renaissance humanism which underlay Milton's creation of Satan.

The great victory of the Renaissance was the restoration of divine immanence to the human world. In the words of Georges Poulet: "In a universe which now seemed entirely subject to vicissitude, there remained only a double awareness of the vicissitude itself and the cosmic force which produced it...God seemed rather the indwelling power that from within tirelessly sustained and prolonged the universal motion by which things and beings accomplished their temporal destiny." During the Renaissance, divinity approaches the immanent "suchness" of Chinese thought, rather than the "otherness" of the medieval era. In fact, the ephemerality of being in a world of change, the most common initiating theme of the tristia in the Chinese myth, is everywhere present in Elizabethan literature. Spenser's "Mutability Cantoes" immediately spring to mind, and Shakespeare explored the topic most completely in his
sonnets. Shakespeare's response to the fleetingness of being is typically ambivalent: the temporal flux may be viewed negatively as the universal leveller as in Sonnets XII and LXIV; or positively as the field of action whereby man, especially the artist, could claim immortality through his work, as in Sonnet XIX where the poet concludes: "Yet, do thy worst old Time; despite thy wrong / My love shall in my verse ever live young."

Coupled with this ambivalent response to ephemerality, we find renewed interest in cyclical nature as the vehicle of divinity most immediately accessible to man. Already suggested in the allegorical personification in Spenser's The Faerie Queene, the use of cyclical nature as a model for human conduct finds complete expression in Shakespeare's plays. For example in The Winter's Tale the values of nature's regenerative powers are attached to certain characters (primarily Mamilius, Florizel, Perdita, and of course, Autolycus), who move through the play and are instrumental in its resolution. Yet behind Shakespeare's pastoral vision of regenerative nature hovers the famous "degree" speech of Ulysses in Troilus and Cressida. Nature was still the lowest link of the Chain of Being, and was corrupted along with humanity by Adam's original sin.

The Reformers emphasized man's fall into a state of corrupted nature and the eschatological concerns of the Redemption and predestination. As a consequence, duration beyond ephemerality consisted of a moment by moment faith in God and personal redemption. Profane nature was more often viewed as a temptation rather than a support, while the efforts of Bacon, Montaigne, and Descartes tended to place man in the position of an observer of natural cycle rather than an equal participant. Seventeenth century man was a prisoner of the instant, his existence preserved moment by moment by an "other" God who guaranteed transcendence of this ephemerality in moral terms at the end of time. The uniquely linear and momentaneous consciousness of man was a favorite subject of seventeenth century poets,
and Milton's *Paradise Lost* is no exception. What is more interesting is his encyclopedic rendering of the problem in terms of the entire historical sweep of Christianity.

The three realms of existence in *Paradise Lost*—Heaven, Earth, and Hell, are complexly parallel and constantly interacting. We find that the fall of Man parallels the fall of Satan but is also caused by it, and that Man is redeemed by Christ who was the cause of Satan's fall. The pattern of downfall is briefly: Satan sins through his envy of the Son's Anointment, then denies his creative union with God in the Son which in turn results in the false abstraction of spirit into matter and the demonic conceptions of time and space. Satan then causes the fall of Adam and Eve who experience these new modes of time and space themselves.

Even before Satan's physical fall the transformation has begun as he tries to express through a physical glorification of the self what God expresses through a spiritual glorification of those who form the "one individual Soul". Thus is erected in the North of Heaven the great golden Palace of Lucifer, and later in Hell, the demonic forces build an ostentatious Pandemonium. A second and more important consequence of Satan's rebellion is the new perception of time and space which he gives the fallen angels and to a lesser degree, man. A hierarchy of perception will make this point clear.

At the apex of the temporal scale is God who has been and ever will be; he interchanges past, present, and future tenses at will, and is both in time and beyond time simultaneously. On the next level we find Milton's curious notion of the angelic perception of time. There is a diurnal cycle of sorts in Heaven, but it affects the angels but subtly; evening and
morning seem to be matters of personal taste. Prelapsarian Adam's temporal experience is, as we would expect, similar to the angels' except his nights are somewhat darker. He has no idea of what death might be and the past is never so important as the present. To the extent that time is illustrated by change through movement, there is no time in Eden.

Fallen Adam's temporal experience is quite different. The separation of mind from God has occurred and Adam has become acutely self-conscious. The changeless cycles of his previous life have been shattered by discord. The experience of time as a linear progression has begun: his past is constantly fading away; the present is never really there, and the future stretches away in "endless miserie". Meanwhile Satan, deservedly, is at the bottom of the scale. He is trapped in a perpetual present of pain and misery. He has no future, absolutely no hope that there will be any change in his condition. Of course there is hope for Adam (though not realized until the concluding lines of the epic) in the cycle of life and death in Christ's redemption.

There is similar scale of identification in the experience of space. For God, space is eternal presence. He is everywhere at once, and the identification is total. For unfallen Adam and the angels, space has definite limits and within this circumscribed area all is right. They cannot "be" everything but they can know that everything is in its proper place. Adam especially delights in participating in the natural harmony of Eden until the Fall when space becomes an indifferent environment. There are blustering winds, varying seasons, and the animals have become carnivorous. Adam is terribly disordered and alone but he is not threatened. Satan has naturally fared worst. He experiences the completely alien and hostile environment of confining Hell without and
the chaos of insanity within.

The last two books of *Paradise Lost* enables Adam to transcend the present and see mankind's hope for reunion with God at the end of time. Satan must live in the present because he cannot die; only eternal damnation awaits him. Paradoxically, man's corruption is not eternal because God has granted him death, and it is with death that Adam is first familiarized in Book Eleven. As the visions unfold, he is acquainted with all other facets of behavior, both good and evil, which comprise the fate of his offspring. Adam becomes humanized by suffering as a parent all the consequences of his disobedient act. But as he remains unconvinced that his fall was truly "fortunate", the true plan of God's infinite mercy is finally revealed when he discovers that Christ will give his own life so that mankind may be redeemed from death into an eventual reunion with the creative force of God in Heaven. At last Adam understand the meaning of history, a history in which his progeny will enjoy the reunion that he has forfeited. Michael's last promise is of the final victory over Sin and Death, the Last Judgement, at which time all hierarchies will dissolve into the Pure Light of God. Finally our general parents pass into historical time, secure in their faith, and strengthened by an understanding of the interactions between time and eternity.

In *Paradise Lost* then, Milton presents the threefold legacy of Adam's fall in terms which circumscribe seventeenth century man's consciousness: in time, existence which endures from moment to moment by virtue of continuous creation; in space, existence which is alienated from a nature which is itself corrupted; and finally, a linear concept of a history which provides possible divine reconciliation only at the end of time itself. To be sure the pastoral delights of cyclical nature were never truly inaccessible, (witness Marvell's *The Garden*), but there.
is little sense of revealed divinity or the possibility of permanent harmony with nature as a path to divinity. Rather, survival of pastoral conventions represented a positive response to the instant, a moment of joy. Typically the negative response is almost as frequent and usually concerns such time-honoured images as the reaper, mower, or scythe. In essence, the eschatological emphasis of Reformed Christianity rendered the regenerative powers of the cyclic myth to an individual moment of consciousness; lasting harmony was relegated to the Last Judgement well beyond the natural sphere.

During the eighteenth century the retreat of divinity from the role of continuous creation is accelerated. According to the principles of Cartesian detachment, the universe came to be perceived as a complicated mechanism of secondary causes originally set in motion by God, the first cause. In this rationalist view man should look to nature not for the noumena of pantheistic experience, but for evidence of the intelligent design of creation which it presents. As the subject-object viewpoint tended to emotionally estrange man from nature, and as divinity was no longer the support of existence, self-consciousness came to be momentaneously preserved by sensation alone, while memory served to string the individual beads of experience into a sense of individual duration. In the most optimistic view, lived sensation (however momentary) becomes the consciousness of being; surely the apex of this "interiorization" is reached with Rousseau's proclamation, "Like God one is sufficient unto oneself". Indeed, if Rousseau's Confessions of 1728 represent the ultimate "interiorization" of consciousness in the early eighteenth century, the work must also be acknowledged as the foundation of Romanticism which developed fifty years later in England and Germany.
Eighteenth century man was conscious only in a moment of sensation; yet as the moment became ever more imbued with feeling, the exceptional man might perceive a self and a reality which are not instantaneous, in short a duration based on a profound revelation. This revelatory moment (whose consequent loss is the ever present Romantic nostalgia) might be based on communing with nature, or the transcendent loss of self in love, or a feeling of the entire past reborn within oneself. Whatever its cause, this Faustian striving for a duration beyond the moment became the essence of pre-Romanticism and certainly a central concern of Goethe's drama.

The presentation of heaven as a cosmogonic reality is a central assumption of the Commedia and Paradise Lost, one that is significantly absent in Goethe's Faust. As a scientific investigator and poet-philosopher, Goethe's fundamental purpose was to represent, in a work of art, man's place within the confines of life on this earth, to explore man's potential and limitations within the natural laws to which he is subjected. In Faust, heaven exists for dramatic purposes; earth and the poet's mind on earth is the real field of action. Goethe's scientific and philosophical researches were directed towards the "universal" which underlies phenomena. To this end he embraced the Neo-Platonic idea of a world-soul from which life emanantes and to which it ultimately returns, and image of the overall harmony into which our unharmonious life on earth might finally resolve. If life is considered to be a series of emanations issuing from and striving to return to the living godhead, it follows that all matter is in a state of continuous flux and change. Moreover as the unceasing cycles of the world-soul animate all physical life in perpetual change, value concepts of durability and permanence find no true correspondence
either in nature or the life of man. As the play vibrates with a vitality which can find no satisfaction in any static situation, so Faust strives for a duration beyond the eighteenth century moment of 'sensitive' consciousness.

Faust's cynicism regarding the possibility of permanent value within natural flux underlies his bet with Mephistopheles. He tells the devil, if I should ever wish a beautiful moment to last, then I will be ready to die and surrender my soul. Paradoxically, by signing the pact Faust opens the floodgates to previously denied emotional and sensual experience, the romantic basis of the revelatory moment and the intuitive understanding sought by his 'higher' soul.

In *Faust* time and space become functions of the imagination as the seeker discovers that every experience is transformed into illusion as reality recedes within the universal metamorphosis. These contrasts between illusion and reality and between form and change comprise the rhythm of cyclic alternation according to which the play functions. From the opening scene where the angels present a view of earth in endless rotation dominated by the quotidian cycle, to the continually shifting landscape of the final "Forest, Rocks, Solitude" scene, Goethe demonstrates the universality of cyclic alternation in human experience. In Faust himself the rhythm of day and night symbolizes the struggle between biological desire and spiritual aspiration. Thus in the "Night" scenes which are the first and last appearances of Faust, the first is preceded by the angelic scene mentioned above which is bathed in light, and the last is succeeded by a light scene in which Faust's immortal spirit is carried upward.

A second focus of cyclical natural symbolism is Goethe's frequent use
of water imagery in all its forms. Its everchanging quality, its perpetual motion, the fact that it is a life-giving force—the water cycle affords an ideal image of the Neo-Platonic world-soul, which similarly emanates into matter and then returns to itself. Goethe makes this point most clearly when Thales says to the ocean: "From the wave was all created / Water will all life sustain / ...Your power the freshness of our life maintains".\textsuperscript{14} While water is the poet's favorite image of metamorphosis, we also find references to the evolution of butterfly from chrysalis, the unfolding of the leaf from its bud, and of course, more mythical images of death and rebirth.

Goethe's use of natural symbolism is well indicated in the events surrounding his apprehension of the Earth-Spirit very early in the drama. Unable to partake of the serene yet overwhelming vision of the Macrocosm, Faust's magical powers conjure the Earth-Spirit which combines water and Neo-Platonic imagery; it is a concrete representation of the dynamic force underlying all change, (in a sense, similar to the Chinese 'Tao'). Unable to grasp the Earth-Spirit's significance, a dejected Faust is on the verge of suicide when the Earth-Spirit remanifests itself in the Christian rebirth symbolism of Easter bells which Faust connects with youthful memories of spring festivals. This celebration of the cyclical regeneration of nature and man moves Faust to tears, and compels his descent to the valley of experience. Such cyclical symbolism represents the flux of eternal return in the poet's world, but only rarely provides a sense of being beyond the momentary sensation. The vitality of Goethe's nature admits no permanence beyond the mortally inaccessible world-soul.

Whereas Dante's work summarized some thirteen centuries of Christianity, Goethe's embraces nearly all of Western culture and the myths of three
thousand years. The cyclical aspects of Faust's myth symbolism would alone fill several volumes and we must restrict ourselves to its most salient features. Hovering in the background is of course the great myth of Christianity, and one of the strengths of Faust is its use of Christian doctrine as myth, still a heretical approach in the eighteenth century. Ignoring Christian propaganda, its imagery provides a mythical setting in which the drama unfolds.

Classical mythology forms an integral aspect of the work, especially in the Helen sub-plot and the Classical Walpurgisnight. In particular the latter festival concentrates many of the Dionysian and fertility figures of antiquity to emphasize the erotic and sensual side of Faust's "lower soul". The regenerative aspect of natural cycle provides for the rebirth of Homunculus at the oceanic beginning of time and the path to the corporeal Helen, as opposed to her conjured shade. Here the myth of the birth of Aphrodite from the sea is presented, and transformed into the cyclic myth of Galatea. As the representative of Eros, Galatea's reunion with Nereus prefigures the reappearance of Helen in the next act and Gretchen after Faust's death, and certainly the culmination of the Christian myth at the play's conclusion. In short, Goethe freely draws upon the most potent myths of eternal return to underscore the perpetually regenerative aspects of the flux of reality, and to suggest the final redemption of Faust himself.

In one of the most striking examples of Goethe's 'modernity', Faust penetrates into the shadowy world beneath myth, the realm of the Mothers. In essence the Mothers guard the memory of mankind, and represent an elemental maternal instinct at the deepest levels of the human psyche. One is tempted to suggest that they are Goethe's pre-Jungian version of
racial memory, but the vagueness of description ("eternal pastime of the eternal Spirit") only indicates that their transforming powers are related in some way to the natural flux. Perhaps Faust's journey to the Mothers is best viewed as an attempt by the mythic hero to apprehend the secret of nature by retracing his way to the origins of creation. In as much as the journey brings him first to Helen of Troy and finally to the Mother of God it is successful.

In Part One Goethe demonstrates how Faust's titanic mission destroyed the innocent lives of Gretchen and her family; while in Part Two Faust's great social projects entail tragic social sacrifices. After the hero has been blinded by Sorge (or Care), he feels an "inner light" which compels his final vision of a social Utopia and his blissful acceptance of the fleeting Moment. Despite Mephistopheles' excitement, Faust is not declaring his desire for the static moment to endure (to recall his original bet); rather, as Harry Slochower indicates in his *Mythopoesis*, "the words salute a continuous task in which the 'Moment' is forever renewed". The key is not in mere activity which seizes the moment, but in the direction of the activity, (and here Goethe is most anti-romantic), which is directed towards the betterment of mankind. In *Faust* we see the resurgence of the cyclic myth, generally within a Neo-Platonic and Classical framework, which allows for progress or evolution within the natural cycle as a dialectical upward striving. The revelatory moment is seized only that it may be renewed by further striving. Reconciliation with divinity is possible; (we do not know whether Faust actually reaches Heaven), but the rewards are most clearly evident in earthly existence. Within the cyclic manifestations of the world-soul duration beyond the moment is acknowledged, in a sense "synthesized", then renewed in the next
moment at a more evolved level. That such a progression is available only to a "super-hero" upon his death is a final testament to Goethe's personal doubts regarding the perfectability of man.

One would expect that the Romantic movement would provide the definitive reintegration of the cyclic myth with nineteenth century literary concerns. Certainly on the simplest level the Romantic poets rehabilitated and rediscovered nature on a scale unmatched in the last millenium; yet so acute was the self-consciousness of the moment, so intense was the Cartesian legacy of "interiorization" of reality and the Faustian striving for possession of reality, that the urgency of the goal almost dictated its evanescent apprehension and consequent loss. As continued scientific advances emphasized the mechanical design of celestial nature, terrestrial nature and man himself became the surviving field of divinity. As a vital being within an organic world, man's relationship to nature came to be seen as one of participation, an identity of process rather than a separation of subjective and objective creatures or products. A revived sense of the numinous power of nature became symbolically related to human nature; whatever is immanent in nature is also imminent within ourselves, and this is what distinguishes Romanticism from mere pantheism, a point well made by Coleridge in his Ode To Dejection:

"We receive but what we give 
And in our life alone does Nature live."

But if nature in some way represents man, one must ask what is the nature of this representation? Here the English school of Romanticism recognized the "imagination" as the central identity between man and nature. The influence of German philosophy was crucial: Kant had proved that reality is forever unknowable to the intellect, and Fichte that nature
itself was only a creation of the ego or the private "will". Denied an intellectual identity of man and nature, the English Romantics seized upon the imagination which participates with nature as a process, and imitates specifically its power of bringing organisms to birth. Coleridge, in particular, determined the poetic imagination as the "exemplastic" power which reshapes our primary awareness of the world into symbolic avenues to the theological. That vague yet vital force which drives nature through cyclic regeneration even in its most violent manifestations is also to be found within the human psyche; the contraries of nature are also those of man.

A brief examination of a representative poem, Shelley's Ode To The West Wind will illuminate the relationship between cyclic nature and man as conceived in one of its more profound studies. The poet at sunset observes the turning of the year, the passage into fall. As night comes on, a violent tempest of hail and rain descends, an event which the poet reads as a sign of the creative destruction that will affect the whole condition of man. In the first stanza, Shelley establishes the "west wind" as the breath of life, the source of seasonal change; yet it cannot be apprehended directly. The poet may only observe its manifestations, and distance himself from the source by describing its effects. The vitality is both destructive and creative, thus in a state resembling death, the seeds as symbols of renewal lie in a bed (again, sexual energy), until the wind infuses them with life as the "breath" of the first line becomes "blow". The stanza concludes with the first of several invocations to the wind to hear its prophet, the poet:
"Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere; 
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!"

In the second stanza Shelley transfers his gaze to the sky. Here the heavens, like the forest, are dying, and yielding their substance up to the destroying wind. The compression of time from year to night signals the nadir of the destruction-preservation cycle in theological imagery to reinforce the idea that this now destroying vitality is the actual realm of divinity.

"Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might
Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh, hear!"

With the third stanza Shelley's social concerns are most evident as the wind destroys what is left of the old "Mediterranean" order of "old palaces and towers / quivering within the waves intenser day". By definition, the wind is also the creator of this order, but it is the mind "lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams" which supports itself by restructuring the manifestations of the west wind, which lends legitimacy to the dying order despite the fact that the reflected civilization is overgrown with vegetation.

In the last two stanzas the poet himself replaces leaf, cloud, and wave as the object of the wind's force. In the fourth he declares that if he were merely part of nature (like a leaf or cloud), or if he still possessed the imaginative strength of childhood, he would not be striving in prayer for communion. That both conceptions are impossible is witnessed by the "fall" of the poet upon "the thorns of life". Denied apprehension of the life-force by self-consciousness and the linearity of time, Shelley,
in the fifth stanza, turns to the earlier suggested identity between
the poetic imagination and the vitality behind nature. The poet demands
to be like a "lyre", the perfect image of art compelled by nature; he
wishes to be an instrument like the forest, sensitive to cyclical changes
yet persisting through those changes. A cycle is implied as Shelley's
thoughts, ("dead" because of their inherent "selfishness"), may become
structures which support new life, in the same manner as a bed may spring
to light when infused with breath. The prayer to the wind stresses
mutual need; if the prophet needs the divine, the divine as assuredly needs
the prophet if the message is to be heard by men. The "lyre" has become
a "trumpet", the wind, as winter becomes spring, must blow through the
poet rather than around him.

For all its revolutionary intents, Shelley's prophetic vision is
essentially a private vision, as were all Romantic visions. In his in­
troduction to The Visionary Company, Harold Bloom notes that because Byron
was the most social of Romantic imaginations, he was the least Romantic.16
The use of the cyclic myth as a structural model for art, and cyclic imagery
as the immanent force behind both nature and the poetic imagination was
never so widespread as during the period of Romanticism. In as much as
the poetic imagination is a private imagination, resurrected and maintained
by a creative elite, apprehension of the unity between man and nature was
reserved at first for the most imaginative. But one can imagine Wordsworth's
pastoral shepherds trampled in the rush of those seeking communion with
nature in the years to come. Socialization along Cartesian and materialist
lines rendered "original" participation with nature inconceivable,
"imaginative" participation became popularized to the point of meaninglessness.

In China the cyclic myth has survived simply because it began as a
myth (or complex of myth) which evolved an accepted cosmology reflected in ritual and art, in government and individual life. The failure of the French Revolution may be seen as the failure to create a new myth, that of the recently discovered "natural man". The Romantic movement was an intellectual revolution which cannot be faulted in its attempt to provide the artistic structures of that new myth doomed to failure because of its "newness".

The legacy of the Romantic movement was the progressive "interiorization" of nature, witnessed in the rise of the science of psychology and the riot of private symbolism in both visual and verbal art, and the subsequent absence of a divinely ruled cosmogonic order as a background universal in art. Since the Romantics, the popular experience of time has remained one dominated by linearity and the linear progress of history. By way of contrast, we recall that the archaic mentality defended itself against linear history by periodically abolishing it through repetition of the cosmogony and a period regeneration of time, or by giving historical events a metahistorical significance that was consoling and coherent with the cosmic order. How different from this cyclic mentality is the post-Hegelian position, in which every effort is directed toward saving and conferring value on the historical event as such, the event for itself and in itself. As existence becomes more and more precarious because of history, the position of linear historicism becomes less and less consoling. With this problem in mind, in the past century we have witnessed attempts by many artists to rehabilitate the cyclic view of history, most notably James Joyce and W.B. Yeats.

Despite the dominance of Christian eschatology in Western thought, the cyclical ideology was never totally overwhelmed in intellectual circles,
and certainly not in cultures which maintained an agrarian base. Beside the conception of linear progress, it survived in the astronomical theories of Tycho Brahe and Kepler, and more significantly in the historical theories of Giordano Bruno, Vico, and most recently, Spengler. The cyclic conception of Vico is especially relevant in modern literature as it influenced both Yeats and Joyce in their temporal thought.

The herculean efforts of W.B. Yeats to rehabilitate the chaos of modern history into a coherent cosmos represent one of the great intellectual adventures of this century. Over a period of nineteen years Yeats explored the occult imagery of the Kabbalah, Neo-Platonism, and the hermeneutic texts of the London theosophists. Aided by his wife’s phenomenal psychic powers of "automatic writing" he finally completed his work, if completion could be possible in such occult areas, and in 1937 published *A Vision*, his personal vision of the true arrangement of reality. Developing his earlier conception of overlapping gyres, Yeats believe that the image of reality was best a Great Wheel of twenty-eight spokes, a lunar cycle corresponding to the phases of the moon. The Great Wheel, representing everything, rendered a coherent reality beneath the chaotic flux of mundane experience, and was categorized through the twenty-eight personality types, the twenty-eight incarnations a man must live through, the twenty-eight phases of any single life, and the twenty-eight basic phases of each two thousand year cycle of world history. Such an esoteric scheme brings us very close to the original concerns of the cyclic myth, especially in its explicit identification of man with the cosmos. The following passage, from Yeats' *Wheels and Butterflies* makes this point more directly than we could suggest through commentary.
...the soul realizing its separate being in the full moon, then, as the moon seems to approach the sun and dwindle away, all but realizing its absorption in God, only to whirl away once more: the mind of a man, separating itself from the common matrix, through childish imaginations, through struggle—Vico's heroic age— to roundness, completeness, and then externalising, intellectualising, systematising, until at last it lies dead, a spider smothered in its own web: the choice offered by the sages, either with the soul from the myth to union with the source of all, the breaking of the circle, or from the myth to reflection and the circle renewed for better or worse. For better or worse according to one's life, but never progress as we understand it, never the straight line, always a necessity to break away and destroy, or to sink in and forget."17

Immediately evident is Yeats' ultimate denial of linear progress, to be replaced by a cyclic conception of the identity of the soul, the real man, with cosmic regeneration.

The cyclic cosmogony of A Vision presented Yeats with a system of metaphor which frequently is at the heart of his most notable poetry, "The Second Coming" being the most famous example of this method. It is a credit to the poet's genius that his unique "vision" is neither didactic nor obscuring in his art; as Richard Ellmann comments, "an awareness of the system was more useful for writing than it is for reading the poem(s)".18 Yet for all the poet's labours in the labyrinthine lore of the occult, for all his genius and personal popularity, his private "cyclic myth" remained a "myth" in its most profane sense of "fiction"; in the mass mind of the twentieth century, time is linear, history progressive, and the poet's prophecy singularly unheard.

Allied with Yeats against the progressive linear conception of history, in Finnegans Wake James Joyce declares history to be "A human pest cycling (past!) and recycling (past!)..."19 For Joyce, not only does history repeat itself, but "the Vico road goes round and round to meet where terms
The Viconian myth of history is to Finnegans Wake what the Homeric myth was to Ulysses: a structural device of complex parallels which tends to invest the microcosm of character with vast and profound echoes of the macrocosm. Harry Levin's critical introduction to the works of Joyce offers a concise summary of Vico's theory which we present in the interests of brevity.

The Viconian pattern of repetition presents "three consecutive periods...characterized as divine, heroic, and civil. Each period contributes its characteristic institution (religion, marriage, and burial rites) and its corresponding virtue (piety, honour, and duty). The inarticulate dark ages give way to the fabulous, and then the historical, forms of literary expression; the original hieroglyphic language is succeeded by metaphorical speech, and at length by an epistolary style and a profane vernacular. The rise of cities is the sum of three epochs of man's activity, yet the ruins of bygone civilization foreshadow the fall of cities. The fourth epoch, and the peculiar twist in Vico's philosophy of history, is the cyclic movement by which the third period swings back into the first again 'da capo'".

In Finnegans Wake the recurrent domestic cycles of Ulysses are subsumed within the larger cyclic matrix of Viconian philosophy. Thus the first three books of the novel represent divine, heroic, and human ages respectively, while the fourth is the reflux that leads to the recreation of the divine age again. Moreover, in Book I the cycle is twice repeated on a smaller scale in the first eight chapters, and in Books II and III it is twice more repeated in the four chapters of each. The main structure is visible as one large cycle, containing four smaller
cycles. This reductive tendency is evident as "wheels within wheels", cyclic images and incidents abound on almost every page of the work. As Levin notes, "the whole sequence is likely to emerge coloured by its context at any moment: '...their weatherings and their marryings and their buryings and their natural selections...' or as '...thunderburst, ravishment, dissolution, and providentiality...' and again, '...eggburst, eggblend, eggburial, and hatch-as-hatch can...'" The effect of such a technique is to suggest a world of cyclical immanence, where myth and arcane correspondence hover behind every gesture or turn of phrase.

Many of the cyclical sub-plots and incidental events are conceptually independent of Vico's theory, yet in the final analysis generally correspond to the cyclic structure. The Earwicker family is the family of man moving through birth, death, and rebirth. The first four chapters follow the father through these phases, and they are represented again in the next four in the cycle of the mother, from her original letter to her renewal as the river. Book I concerns the father, the mother, and Shem, her favorite son, while Books II and III concern the father, the mother, and Shaun, the father's favorite son and his successor. Finally in Book IV, the mother (again as a river) renews herself and family once more.

Within the structural framework afforded by Vico's regenerative spiral of history, Joyce creates a pan-cultural mythological complex which borrows freely from Scandinavian, Oriental, Germanic, Celtic, Romanic, and of course, classical and Christian mythologies. According to John Vickery, the encyclopedic inclusiveness of *Finnegans Wake* more than suggests Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. Thus the novel "is, in effect, a human comedy on man's religious consciousness, dramatizing a secularized and so comic version of the struggle between religious guilt and fear
and imaginative satisfaction and sexual joy. Informing the fear is the fact of mortality. By stressing the ritual forms of death, Finnegans Wake follows closely the lead of The Golden Bough and is particularly sedulous in using its images and figures.23 Vickery goes on to outline the extensiveness of Joyce's Frazerian images, focussing on the interplay between Shem and Shaun. It must be remembered that whereas Frazer's work collects, arranges, and comments upon the myths of archaic man, he does not presume their continuing operation within a modern consciousness. Indeed the sheer inclusiveness of Joyce's culminating work, (Tindall calls it "perhaps the most comprehensive of myths"24), poses problems which are implicit in the mentality of the twentieth century.

A myth composed by a modern artist, even one of Joyce's stature, is different from ancient myth. Certainly a modern myth is more conscious, and more private, and its use of irony is quite absent in the original models. These three characteristics, especially the privacy of a "monomyth" within what is surely the least accessible of modern novels, lead one to conclude that Joyce's novel is not so much a myth as an artistic attempt to rehabilitate the cyclic myth for modern man. That the attempt is a unique achievement of monumental genius is not disputed.

Let us reconsider how the modern mentality defies both the esoteric "Great Wheel" myth of Yeats and the pan-cultural Viconian myth of Joyce's Finnegans Wake. In essence, twentieth-century Western man has experienced, by adulthood, an almost complete displacement of the modes of consciousness necessary for mythology to exist as an explanation of reality. Henry Murray's brilliant essay, "The Possible Nature of a Mythology to Come;" outlines the extent of this transformation from archaic man's "child-like" mythologizing to the extreme rationalism and consequent alienation of
modern man. Four aspects of displacement are indicated:

(1) Emotional identifications with nature and projections into space are displaced by cognitive detachment allowing dissections of the environment into concepts of material particles and energy;

(2) a progression from non-verbal images and feelings to emotive diction, followed by the theoretical diction of abstract concepts, and finally to symbols ultimately dissociated from images and feelings;

(3) an initial receptivity to visions, sensory impressions, and authoritative statements changes with cultural evolution and aging to a state of suspension of judgement in the absence of indubitable proof;

(4) an ever higher standard as to what constitutes sufficient basis or evidence for a statement.25

These then are the psychological roots of our modern incapacity to embrace a mythopoeic perspective in the twentieth century. Naturally, the extent to which literature transcends these limitations is the extent of its capacity to present myth; and as we have seen in Yeats and Joyce, the world of myth lies very close to the centre of their literary preoccupations. Lamenting the separation of fact and value, T.S. Eliot named it "the dissociation of sensibility", a cultural phenomena which implies the impossibility of art because we have come to accept fact and empirical evidence as the total reality. By attempting to rehabilitate the cyclic myth as that which is immanent behind empirical reality, Yeats
and Joyce attempt to restore to art its cosmogonic function of explaining the real nature of reality.
Footnotes to the Cyclic Myth in Western Literature


3. Ibid., pp. 141-47.


6. "The meaning of this work is not simple but rather may be called polysemous, that is to say, having more meaning than one, for it is one meaning that we get through the letter, and another which we get through the thing the letter signifies; the first is called literal but the second allegorical or mystic." Cited by Thomas Bergin, Dante's Divine Comedy (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1971), p. 78.


8. Diagrams of Dante's conceptions of the Cosmos and Hell are reproduced from the facing pages of Thomas Bergin's Dante's Divine Comedy.


13. As Slochower points out, "Long before Fichte' and Whitehead, Goethe opposed what Hopkins calls 'the bifurcation of nature'. His 'symphronistic method' aimed to find the recurrent phase, the primal phenomenon or 'Urphänomen'; in botany, the 'Urpflanze', in the animal world, the 'Urtier'. The key words in his vocabulary are 'world' and 'unity'". Harry Slochower, Mythopoesis: Mythic Patterns in the Literary Classics (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 187-88.


20. Ibid., p. 452.


22. Ibid., p. 148.


V

CONCLUSION
As Joyce envisioned Dublin as the city which was the progress of all cities, and its circular Vico Road as the cyclic path of civilization, we may now borrow his analogy and survey our own path through the complexities of comparative analysis of Chinese and Western European literature—a path which varies in its emphasis on the cyclic or the progressive. At first the trail seemed barred by the insular homogeneity of Chinese Culture, but a key was found in the relative importance and evolution of the cyclic myth in both cultures.

We have maintained that archaic man, whether Eastern or Western, shared the archetypal insight of a cyclic mentality and participated in functionally similar cyclic liturgies until the institutionalization of religion fostered divergent evolutions. The initial and essential differentiation was engendered by the influence of Hebraic Messianism in the development of Judaeo-Christian culture. By projecting the archaic victory of the king (in maintaining the periodic regeneration of all nature) into a Messianic future, Judaeo-Christianity came to perceive time and history lineally, and trace the course of humanity from initial Fall to final Redemption as a straight line. In this view, history is seen as the epiphany of God, and man, created to serve and honour this divinity, achieves divine reconciliation only at the end of time. In succeeding centuries, although cyclic naturalism survived in cosmological symbolism and the cycle of the liturgical year with its solar rites of incarnation and lunar rites of atonement, death, resurrection, and ascension, Christianity remained essentially a faith of linear eschatology. This notion was assured since its very heart was the paradigmatic life of Christ, a historical event not subject to periodicity.

By way of comparison, through its maintenance of the original anthro-
pocentric emphasis and consequent lack of religious institutionalization, the heart of Chinese riteopoesis remained the ever recurring natural cycle whose principle is the Tao which provides liberation from the anguished temporality of linear consciousness. In the Myth of Divine Administration the cyclic myth is the divine pattern of the celestial hierarchy, with enlightenment as recognition of the Supreme Being as the ultimate divinity at the centre of a quadrantal universe of incessant regeneration. Ideally, consciousness becomes the envisagement of man's essential unity with God and his homogeneity with the divine. In the institution of Ming T'ang, the cyclic myth is the pattern of terrestrial bureaucracy with enlightenment as recognition of the emperor as the Son of Heaven and the Representative of Earth at the centre of this tetra-symmetrical universe of perpetual renewal. Again, ideal consciousness is the envisagement of man's intermediary role in the cosmic interfusion of celestial and terrestrial, and his position in the harmonious trinity of Heaven, Earth, and Man. At the centre of Chinese culture we find an abiding faith in this cyclic ontology.

The differentiation between linear eschatology in Judaeo-Christian culture and cyclic ontology in Chinese culture is evident and continued in the mensopoesis of the rationalization of philosophy. The history of the survival and abstraction of the cyclic mentality in Western philosophy is one of changing orientation and speculation regarding man's relationship to, rather than identify with, divinity. Thus, allowing philosophical sanction to the Hellenistic barbarian myths and mystery religions, the Neo-Platonists attempted to replace the historicity of Christ with a vulgar spiritualism which endowed events of historical Christianity with "meaning" through the importation of non-Christian natural and mythological symbolism. While the Middle Ages were dominated by the eschatological conception of the end
of the world, medieval man attempted to moderate this harsh view by incorporating theories of cyclical undulation. These attempted to render reality, through allegory and mimesis, as the operative sphere of divinity wherein the archetypes of natural cycle and mythological quest were subsumed. With the renewed anthropocentrism of the Renaissance, divine immanence was restored to the human world. Although duration beyond ephemerality still consisted of faith in God and personal redemption, and nature was seen as a temptation rather than a support, in the Renaissance divinity nevertheless approached the immanent "suchness" of Chinese thought. In the seventeenth century a revived sense of man's limitations, his essentially linear consciousness, engendered an existence which was alienated from a corrupted nature, and dependent on divinely continuous creation for duration beyond the moment. In accordance with the reductive principles of Descartes, nature and man were further estranged, consciousness became momentary sensations, and divinity achieved a mechanical "otherness" which has continued to the present. A line extends through Rousseau, Goethe, and the English Romantics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: this is the attempt to restore divinity to the human world, a rehabilitation of the cyclic myth whether manifested as in the Neo-Platonic "world-soul", or in the imaginative union with the energies of nature.

At the risk of over-generalizing, the evolution and survival of the cyclic myth in Western thought presents a reliable index to changing views of man's relationship to divinity. Thus during the medieval era the cyclic myth is subsumed within a divine hierarchy with enlightenment as recognition of God-Creator as man's only support, while during the Reformation period it is subsumed within a cosmological pattern with enlightenment as recognition of man's place in the eschatology of Christian history. Later,
in the Romantic period the cyclic myth survives as the divine "spirit" of the natural world, with enlightenment as the apprehension of this "spirit" immanent in the imagination and nature; while in our modern sampling, we witnessed its survival as aesthetically private patterns of history. It would appear that the predominant Christian eschatology has transformed a cyclic myth whose various survivals delineate the heterogeneity of Western European culture.

Within the Chinese mensopoesis of philosophical rationalization we do not find such heterogeneous evolution. The Chinese mind did never lose sight of an essentially anthropocentric cyclic construct unto a universal and perpetual oneness. Indeed Chinese cosmology everywhere reflects the tremendous influence of the cyclic myth, whether as quadrantal progress of incessant renewal (in the institution of Ming T'ang), a perfect harmony of one-in-all and all-in-one (in the I Ching), a perpetual succession of five elements in sequence (in the Yin-Yang school), a great current of spontaneous transformation (in Taoism), or a constant process of unceasing production and reproduction (in Confucianism), the Chinese universe remains a harmonious and organic whole. While the ontological reality shifts from the infinite oneness and perpetuality of an absolute divinity, to the harmony of change in the ultimate Tao, to the integral spontaneity of transformation in Nature, and finally to the wholeness of human life and the oneness of being, the Chinese epistemological belief of mutual communication and influence between the cosmos and man, the microcosmos, remains true and real. And as the ontology becomes ever more conceptual yet existentially anthropocentric, man, with his rational mind and affectional heart, eventually stands at the centre of the cosmos. Thereat, with a sense of nostalgia, or a spontaneous response, or a consciousness of responsibility, he is able
to obtain freedom within a world of constant transformation and reconciliation with the cosmos as a whole.

Despite the above stated and implicit contrasts between the homogeneous and fragmented cultures, the literary function of the cyclic myth in Chinese and Western literature all in all proves to be significantly similar in being the informing structure of a literary work. In both literatures, the cyclic myth is often the underlying pattern of the temporal, spatial, and thematic structures of a particular work. The cyclic schema as a literary structure is nevertheless always pointing outside or beyond itself. Especially in Chinese literature this inclination towards transcendency seems original with the archaic psyche which enlarged or reconciled linear consciousness by ever "pointing" to the correspondences between macrocosm and microcosm. In Western literature cyclic structure is rarely so transcendental simply because a cyclic cosmogony has only rarely been an ontological reality for man. In any explicitly Christian frame of reference a literary work may gain universality and inclusiveness through cyclic schema, but the linear nature of consciousness and history precludes the involvement of a truly cyclic cosmogony in the work.

In its Chinese context, the cyclic schema evolves through stages of mythical envisagement, ritual manipulation, and philosophical rationalization, and finds literary expression most frequently in the "quest" cycle: the call, the quest itself, and the fulfillment of the quest through reconciliation of the unity between man and the cosmos. It provides a temporal, spatial, and thematic structure consisting of the tristia in the profane time of the terrestrial world, the subsequent itineraria in the "great" time of the demonic or underworld, and the eventual reconciliation in the sacred time of the celestial sphere. As the climax of the thematic structure, re-
conciliation indicates the centrifugal nature of the cyclic spirit which always strives for transcendency in terms of harmony, identification, or assimilation—accomplished through such literary elaborations as conversion, canonization, and immortalization. It is this transcendental nature of reconciliation, which moves beyond local literary reference to re-affirm man's unity with the cosmos, that reflects the central position of the cyclic schema in the homogeneity of Chinese mythology, ritual, philosophy, and literature.

In contrast, the Judaeo-Christian world-view of the Western literary works we have studied permits the survival of the cyclic myth in symbolism of the natural world and the Christian liturgical year, and in the heroic quest cycle, but it is much more reluctant to posit periodicity and incessant transformation as the ontological basis of man's unity with the divine. As a master of mimesis of secular Christian reality and an encyclopedic symbolist in the exegetical tradition, Dante presents a cosmogonic hierarchy of concentric circles, a heroic quest cycle of tristia, itineraria, and reconciliation, and an ontological hierarchy based on the poet-hero's spiralling movement to the still centre of being. What is absent in his reconciliation with divinity is the elevation of cyclic Nature, as the immediate field of divine immanence, to a position of mutual interdependence with Man and God. The *Commedia* is cyclic in structure but linear and progressive insofar as reconciliation lies in the future beyond the corrupted mundane world. Focusing on the tristia, the linear and momentaneous consciousness of man, Milton's *Paradise Lost* affirms man's position in the corrupted world as a consequence of the parallel fall of Man and Satan. Here, continuous creation in the present and divine reconciliation in the future become the justification for the linearity of
time and history, and the natural world is seen as a reflection of man's own limitations. Although maintaining the progressive view of history, Goethe challenges the limitations of linear consciousness by rehabilitating cyclic nature to a position of immanence, his "world-soul". Yet so strong is the Cartesian awareness of sensitive momentary consciousness that Faust must deny the possibility of permanent value within natural flux even as the "valued" moment appears. Romantic thought of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries continues Goethe's dissection of the moment, and most closely approaches the Chinese world-view in the rehabilitation of cyclic nature as divine immanence accessible to and paradigmatic in the human imagination. But with the rise of a scientific materialism which tended to regard nature as an object for analysis and exploitation rather than a field of participation, the cyclic harmony of Man, God, and Nature never achieved any ontological significance in the popular mind—despite the renewal of cyclic concepts of history in the modern works of Yeats and Joyce.

Considering the increasing popularity of the cyclic schema in recent years, and its survival in China for upwards of a millenium, it may yet prove to be the most satisfactory ontological position for the individual psyche against the linear consciousness of a world of change. Even as the central tenet of the homogeneous Oriental culture it has not remained static and in Chinese thought we have traced the shifting ontological reality from the divine to the natural and eventually to the existential. Certainly in the West the retreat of the cyclic myth seemed inevitable with the abandonment of the archetypes of repetition, while in the anthropocentric culture of the Chinese world its dispersion was held in check by the counterpoise of the terrestrial and the celestial, and the mediating role of man in the interfusion of Heaven and Earth.
A student approaching the comparative study of Chinese literature must acknowledge the unique homogeneity of man, nature, and divinity in terms which have only recently been approached by Western literature. He must acknowledge the continuing conviction that there is a mutual communication or influence between the cosmos and man who stands at the centre of universal events. And he must acknowledge that man is then responsible for maintaining the cosmic harmony, a fact which delineates the notion that the Chinese view not only rejects the destiny of human beings as final and irreducible, but also rejoices in the transcendental freedom within a world of perpetual change and universal wholeness. It is this, man's creative ability on the cosmic plane as well as the historical, which most distinguishes Chinese man from his Western counterpart.
VI

APPENDIXES
### Abbreviation of Titles of Source-books of Chinese Mythology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Romanization</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLRS</td>
<td>周禮樂氏</td>
<td>Matchmaker: Chou Ritual</td>
<td>Chou Li Mei Shih</td>
<td>C. 100 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSOW</td>
<td>周官書篇</td>
<td>Documents of Chou</td>
<td>Chou Shu Ch'ang Tai P'ian</td>
<td>C. 300 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTCH</td>
<td>楚語招魂</td>
<td>The Summons of the Soul: The Songs of the South</td>
<td>Ch'u Tzu T'ao Huan</td>
<td>342 - 250 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTSKT</td>
<td>某子屈楚之書</td>
<td>Kuang Sang Ch'u: Chuang Tzu</td>
<td>Kuang Tzu Kuang Sang Ch'u</td>
<td>250 - 320 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTW</td>
<td>楚問</td>
<td>The Heavenly Questions: The Songs of the South</td>
<td>Ch'u Tzu T'ien Men</td>
<td>342 - 250 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSK</td>
<td>風俗通義</td>
<td>General Introduction to Customs</td>
<td>Feng Su T'ung I</td>
<td>C. 150 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HFTSK</td>
<td>釤非子過</td>
<td>Ten Faults: Han Fei Tzu</td>
<td>Han Fei Tzu Shih Kuo</td>
<td>C. 233 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HFTSL</td>
<td>釤非子說</td>
<td>Collected Persuasions: Han Fei Tzu</td>
<td>Han Fei Tzu Shuo Lin</td>
<td>C. 233 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HNTCSSP</td>
<td>淮南子精神篇</td>
<td>Spirituality: Huai Nan Tzu</td>
<td>Huai Nan Tzu Ch'ing Shen P'ian</td>
<td>178 - 122 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HNTTHP</td>
<td>淮南子時務篇</td>
<td>Administration: Huai Nan Tzu</td>
<td>Huai Nan Tzu Hsu Wu P'ian</td>
<td>178 - 122 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HNTLMP</td>
<td>淮南子雜說篇</td>
<td>Investigation on Antiquity: Huai Nan Tzu</td>
<td>Huai Nan Tzu Lan Hsiung P'ian</td>
<td>178 - 122 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HNTTPC</td>
<td>淮南子本經篇</td>
<td>Major Treatises: Huai Nan Tzu</td>
<td>Huai Nan Tzu P'ing Ching P'ian</td>
<td>178 - 122 B.C.</td>
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Appendix III: Reconstruction of Some Chinese Myths

i. Myths of Creation

A. In the beginning there was Chaos, egg-like and pregant with P'an Ku, the Fathomless Antiquity.¹ The primal god lay in the dark womb of Chaos for nearly eighteen thousand years before his violent birth.² Bearing a dragon's head upon a serpent's body,³ he awoke and fought the darkness with an axe-stone.⁴ P'an Ku became the medium of the forming world, growing between the clear and weightless which rose as the sky, and the dark and heavy which descended as the earth.⁵ His breathing was the wind and his puffing the storm. The opening and closing of his eyes caused the turning of day and night.⁶ When he was angry the weather was gloomy and when he was happy it was fine.⁷

This process continued for another eighteen thousand years, until the sky was extremely high and the earth tremendously thick.⁸ Then the transmogrification began. P'an Ku's gigantic limbs and entrails became the four extremes of the earth and the five greatest mountains; his flesh turned into fertile soil, his hairy-skin into grasses and trees; his
sweat became rain and marshes, his veins and blood formed the rivers and streams; his breath was transformed into wind and cloud, his voice became the thunder, while his left eye became the sun and his right the moon; finally, his hair changed into myriads of stars and constellations.\(^9\) Thus the universe was formed from the son of Chaos.\(^{10}\)


3. Adapted from WYINC, quoted by KPWC, IX, cited by Yuán, *ibid.*, p. 34.


B. The God of the Central Region was called Hun Tun (Chaos)\(^1\)---a primal simplicity in which myriad things were confounded and not yet separated from each other.\(^2\) It was undefined and yet complete in itself.\(^3\) It was an insubstantial form of a round,\(^4\) bird-like shape with six feet and four wings.\(^5\)
The God of the South Sea was called Shu (brief, ephemeral) and the god of the North Sea was called Hu (sudden, fleet). From time to time Shu and Hu came together for a meeting in the territory of Hun Tun, and Hun Tun treated them very generously. Shu and Hu discussed how they could repay his kindness. "All men" they said "have seven openings so they can see, hear, eat and breathe. But Hun Tun alone doesn't have any. Let's try boring him some! " Every day they bored another hole, and on the seventh day Hun Tun died.

*Chuang Tzu's account of the death of Chaos is amplified with relative materials from other sources, for better understanding.

5. Shan Hai Ching, T'u Tsan, Pu Chu (Taipei: Chung Hua Press, 1960, duplication), p. 34.
6. Watson, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

C. Before Heaven and Earth took shape, there was only undifferentiated formlessness. From this vacuity emerged two gods, who produced the universe (of space and time). The universe produced material force, which was extremely secure. Everything clear and light drifted up to become heaven;
everything heavy and turbid solidified to form earth. It was especially easy for the clear and refined to unite but extremely difficult for the heavy and turbid to solidify. Therefore, heaven was formed first and the earth became definite later. The material forces of Heaven and Earth combined to form Yin and Yang. The concentrated forces of Yin and Yang became the four seasons, and the scattered forces of the four seasons became myriad things. When the hot force of Yang accumulated, fire was produced and the essence of the material force of fire became the sun. When the cold force of Yin accumulated, water was produced and the essence of the material force of water became the moon. The excessive essence of sun and moon became the stars and planets. Heaven received the sun, moon and stars, while Earth received water and soil.  

1. Adapted from HNTCSP, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 31.

After P'an Ku, Father of all Gods, came a succession of deities: several supernal mother-goddesses and two superlative gods—the Supremacy of Heaven and the Supremacy of Earth.¹ One supernal goddess, Nü Wa, was overcome by the barrenness of the earth and while sitting by a lake she modelled her own images from clay and water.² Surprisingly, the clay models came to life with her last touch, and began to sing and dance around her.³ She was
so well pleased that she formed many more images and matched them to engender future generations. Thus man's creation by Nü Wa, the goddess with a dragon body, heralded the arrival of the third superlative god, the Supremacy of Man. Nü Wa became the Mother of Mothers and the Goddess of Music and Marriage.


3. Adapted from FSTL, cited by TPYL, I, 78-4b.

4. Adapted from FSTL, cited by Ma, op. cit., 3. Also Yüan, op. cit., p. 55. Also adapted from LCYL, cited by Yüan, ibid., pp. 56, 59. Cf. Wên I-t’uo, Kao T'iang Shên Nü Ch'uan Shuo Chih Fên Hsi: Shen Hua Yü Shih (Peiping: Chung Hua Press, 1956), pp. 81-117.

5. SHC, TT, PC, p. 189.

6. Adapted from CWCT, cited by Yüan, op. cit., p. 59. Adapted from HNTSLP, cited by Yüan, ibid., pp. 45, 59. Also cf. Yüan, ibid., p. 40. Some Chinese legends profess that Nü Wa is a sister of Fu Hsi, the Supernal God of the East. They are the only two human creatures left after the Great Deluge, so they get married and become the first ancestors of human beings.

iii. The Myth of the Great Deluge: the Destruction of the Universe

Sometime after the creation of Man, intolerance between Kung Kung (the God of Water) and his father, Chu Jung (the God of Fire) prompted the former to rise against Chu Jung in a great battle. With the help of Hsiang Liu, a lesser god with nine heads and a serpent's tail, Kung Kung (who himself had a serpent-body and red hair) raised terrible storms and violent floods against his
father. The battle was fought from Heaven to Earth and disaster was universal. Kung Kung was soon defeated and in angry despair he knocked his head on Mount Pu Chou, the Pillar of Heaven, with such force that the four extremes of Earth collapsed. Accordingly, the dome of the sky was broken and the various fires of Heaven rained upon the Earth; great chasms appeared and floods poured forth, devastating most life on Earth.  


2. Ibid., p. 32
   SHC, TT, PC, pp. 137, 211.

3. Ibid., p. 137

   Adapted from HNTTWP, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 67.
   Adapted from HNTLMP, cited by Yuan, Ibid., p. 60.
   Shen, op. cit., p. 9-10.
   Graham, op. cit., p. 96.

5. SHC, TT, PC, p. 144.
   Yuan, op. cit., p. 56.

6. Ibid., p. 56.
   SHC, TT, PC, p. 189.
   Tu, op. cit., p. 32.

7. Adapted from SCSCPShPC, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 59.
   SHC, TT, PC, op. cit., pp. 36, 189.
   Cf. Yuan, op. cit., p. 58.
   Adapted from HNTLMP, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 60.
   Adapted from HNTTWP, cited by Yuan, Ibid., p. 67.
   Shen, op. cit., pp. 9-10.
Figure: Nu Wa and Fu Hsi

This sketch of a funerary sculpture from a Han tomb of 147 A.D. illustrates the myth of the brother-sister or husband-wife relationship of the two supernal gods, with their mingled bodies. (Index of Bronzes and Sculpture of Ancient China, Chin Shih Suo Shih Suo III & IV.)
iv. The Myth of Paradise Rebuilt and the Golden Age

The Supernal Mother, Nü Wa, assumed the task of rebuilding the universe and the earthly paradise.\(^1\) Out of her deep love for mankind, she melted colorful stones to glue the broken sky, used the legs of a giant turtle to support the four posts of the Earth's extremes, and stored reed ashes to fill the chasms and stop the terrible floods.\(^2\) As the physical universe was mended, she killed the devouring beasts, enabling the people of Earth to enjoy a peaceful life again. Eventually, life became joyful and happy, and men were freed from need and worry. Food was plentiful; all creatures lived jubilantly together—even the tiger's head and serpent's tail were playful. In fact, men realized no distinction between themselves and nature.\(^3\) It was the Golden Age.\(^4\)

1. Yüan, op. cit., p. 58.

2. Ibid., p. 58.
   Graham, op. cit., p. 96.
   Adapted from HNTLMP, cited by Yüan, op. cit., p. 60.
   Shên, op. cit., p. 9.
   Adapted from SCSCPSHP, cited by Shên, ibid., p. 10

3. Adapted from HNTLMP, cited by Yüan, op. cit., p. 68.
   Adapted from HNTPCP, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 68.

4. Ibid., p. 65.

v. The Myth of the Silver Age

Long after the passing of Nü Wa, there lived an almighty god who was loved and respected by all divine beings.
Huang Ti was the first god to be enthroned as the Supremacy of the Universe. During his long rule the universe was in a fine state of flux and reflux. This was the Silver Age, in which the day and night, and the four seasons entered permanent rotation. There was no conscious differentiation between god, man, and nature. Divine beings were welcome passengers of earth, the winged gods and goddesses enjoying resorts provided by five giant turtles who bore the five divine mountains on the Ocean-Valley of Void. But human beings were the happiest creatures. For example, in Hua Hsu country, famous for its splendid flowers, they lived in paradise and felt no infection in life nor sorrow for death during their lifespan of some hundred years. The titans, offspring of the gods, flourished immortally and travelled freely between Heaven and Earth through various divine trees or spiral roads on divine mountains.

1. Adapted from SCLH, cited by Yüan, op. cit., p. 104. Adapted from PT, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 104. Also cf. Yüan, ibid., p. 98.

2. Adapted from PHTWH, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 74. Also cf. Yüan, ibid., p. 70. Adapted from HNTIMP, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 68. Also cf. Yüan, ibid., p. 65.


4. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 135, 141, 177, 185, 192, 206, 80 (TT).
vi. The Myth of Passageways to Heaven

Chinese mythology mentions many passageways to Heaven; the most famous are the spiral roads of Mount K'un Lun, Mount Chao, and Mount Têng Pao, and the stairway of the Chien, the divine tree. Lying in some mysterious region far above all mountains, Mount K'un Lun is held to be the second highest mountain in China. Although not as high as Mount Pu Chou, the Pillar of Heaven, legend describes it as lost in the clouds. An abode of perfect blessedness, it consists of five circular regions connected by a spiral road. The first circle, the Mount of Fire, burns forever, making human passage impossible. An Abyss of Sinking Water upon which nothing will float forms the second circle, while the third is the divine palace K'un Lun, formed from five solemn castles and twelve towers. Here the immortals feast on ambrosia and hold conferences. It is entered through a great eastern gate facing the dawn, and guarded by K'ai Ming (the daybreak), a divine being with a tiger's body and nine heads with human faces. In the fourth circle is the Mount of the Cool Wind. This is the realm of immortalization, the River of Clearness flows into the Lake of Purity, which provides the water of life for immortals' thirst. This sacred water is kept...
by a lesser god in the shape of a bull with the tails of horses, eight legs, and two human faces. But he is also the god of war—when he appears there will be war and disaster. The uppermost circle is the Hanging Garden, so high above the clouds that it appears to hang from Heaven. It is the realm of spiritualization, and by ascending this circle one may command the wind and rain.

The fifth circle is distinguished as the home of magical trees of Sapphire, Nephrite, Jasper, Jade, Amethyst, Coral, Agate, Amber Garnet, and Pearl. They provide ambrosia and nectar for the divine beings. The gate to the last circle is guarded by Yin Chao, a mightly god with a tiger's body, human face, and two tremendous wings. Within the garden several precious trees of life are guarded by Li Chu, a powerful god who has three heads and six eyes. Each head sleeps and watches in turn.

Beyond the fifth circle is the divine dwelling of Huang Ti, the realm of divinity and the divider between the Nine Heavens and the Nine Earths. Here the gate is kept by Lu Wu, who also has a tiger's body and a human head, as well as nine tails. Lu Wu is also the Superintendent of the Nine Heavens. As a whole the spiral road of Mount K'un Lun is the most solemn and difficult passageway between Heaven and Earth. It is mainly for divine beings and is forbidden to human beings who would surely succumb to its obstacles. With the exception of Mount K'un Lun, the other passageways are at least humanly accessible—however difficult. The spiral roads of
Mount Chao and Mount Têng Pao are of this kind.\textsuperscript{19}

It is interesting to note that in many of the mythical paradises a divine tree bridges Heaven and Earth with numerous branches for the various seekers.\textsuperscript{20} The legend of the divine tree, Chien, is a perfect example. This tree grows in the centre of Tu Kuang plain, the central plain of earthly paradise. The land is ever green, ever blooming, and full of singing birds and dancing phoenixes; a land where hundreds of grains ripen in all seasons. The tree itself is very large; its nine spiral branches and nine crooked roots form a stairway to Heaven.\textsuperscript{21} It is said that the Sovereign God of the East is the first one to walk through it.\textsuperscript{22}

1. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 40-41, 158.
Cf. Yüan, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 48, 52.

2. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 160, 206.
Cf. Yüan, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 48, 52.

3. SHC, TT, PC, p. 140
Cf. Yüan, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 48, 52

4. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 150, 206-07; 71, 74, 79, 80 (TT).
Also cf. Yüan, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 48-49, 53.

5. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 36, 189.
Adapted from SCSCP\textit{SHPC}, cited by Yüan, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 59.
Adapted from HNTT\textit{WP}, cited by Yüan, \textit{ibid.}, p. 67.
Yüan, \textit{ibid.}, p. 58.

6. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 40-41, 158-60.
Adapted from HNT\textit{THP}, cited by Yüan, \textit{ibid.}, p. 52.

7. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 193-94.
Adapted from SSC, XIII, cited by Yüan, \textit{ibid.}, p. 105.
vii. The Myth of the Divine Conference and the Rebellion of Ch'ih Yu

During the Silver Age, when Huang Ti was at the height of his power, the first divine conference of gods and spirits was
called. It was held atop Mount T'ai (the great peace) and the Supremacy of the Universe arrived in a sacred elephant chariot driven by the holy bird, Pi Fang—a red-striped green ibis with a white beak on a human face and a single leg. His attendant was the Titan, Ch'ih Yu, who was descended from Yen Ti, one of the sun-gods. Ch'ih Yu possessed a human body, a buffalo horn, four eyes, eight hands and eight cloven-hoofed legs. He commanded a heard of wolves and tigers to clear the road for the Supreme Being. Dusting the road after Ch'ih Yu were the Elder of the Rain, who boasted the body of a silkworm, and the Chief of the Wind, who had a deer's body with leopard spots and a snake's tail, but a sparrow's head with twin deer horns. Huang Ti examined and punished or rewarded all the gods and spirits before receiving their praise and respects. Unfortunately, the glory of Huang Ti provoked a strong desire for power in Ch'ih Yu's heart. Following the Divine Conference, each of Ch'ih Yu's eighty-one brothers also became ambitious for power. Ch'ih Yu's craving finally resulted in a conspiracy against his grandfather, Yen Ti, the Superlative Sun-God in the south. Under Ch'ih Yu's malicious persuasion his titan brothers, the Chief of the Wind and the Elder of the Rain, numerous monsters and evil spirits, the brave people of the south, and the warriors of Miao (offspring of the Supreme Being) all joined the rebellion. In order to avoid a disastrous war with his beloved human beings, Yen Ti withdrew northwards. Thus Ch'ih Yu occupied the south, but, his desire for power
unfulfilled, he persuaded the Titan, Kua Fu, and his followers
(offspring of the God of the Soil) to join him in his re-
bellion against the Supremacy of the Universe.\(^\text{19}\)

The Supreme Being called out all the mysteriously powerful
spirits and sacred animals and the gods and goddesses in all
realms to suppress the growing rebellion.\(^\text{20}\) The battle was
ferocious and it was not until the Goddess of Dark Mystery in
the Nine Heaven deused a mysterious strategy that the Supreme
Being was assured of victory and the capture of Ch'ih Yu.\(^\text{21}\)
All the evil spirits and malicious gods were either killed or
deprived of divinity, and their offspring were forever banished
from Heaven.\(^\text{22}\) Ch'ih Yu died in a set of sacred manacles
which were afterward cast upon a vast plain where they turned
into a maple forest. The red leaves signify Ch'ih Yu's anger
and plead his unfulfilled dream.\(^\text{23}\)

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   Adapted from HFTSK, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 111.
2. Ibid., p. 111.
3. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 43, 134.
4. Adapted from HFTSK, cited by Yüan, op. cit., p. 111.
5. Yüan, ibid., p. 112.
   Adapted from IS, v. 5, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 74.
   Adapted from LSHCSCYC, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 118.
6. Adapted from PHTWH, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 74.
   Adapted from HNTSTP, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 74.
   SHC, TT, PC, pp. 210-11.
   Yüan, op. cit., p. 112.
Adapted from LYHT, quoted by TPYL, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 118.
Adapted from LYHT, quoted by TPYL, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 118.
Adapted from LT, quoted by LS, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 118.
Cf. Yuan, ibid., p. 118.

Adapted from HFTSK, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 111.

9. Adapted from HFTSK, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 111.
Adapted from CTTW, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 111.

10. Adapted from HFTSK, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 111.
Adapted from CTLS, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 111.

11. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 38, 57.
Yuan, op. cit., pp. 106-07.

12. Ibid., p. 112.
Adapted from CSCMP, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 118.

Yuan, op. cit., p. 112.
Adapted from LYHT, quoted by TPYL, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 118.

Adapted from CSCMP, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 118.

SHC, TT, PC, p. 201.

SHC, TT, PC, p. 49.
Adapted from TTTT, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 119.
Cf. Yuan, ibid., p. 119.

17. Yuan, ibid., pp. 84, 109.
Adapted from SCLH, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 89.

Adapted from CSCMP, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 118.

19. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 145, 199, 210-11.
Yuan, op. cit., pp. 119-20.

20. Ibid., pp. 118, 121.
SHC, TT, PC, pp. 145, 182, 201.
Cf. Yuan, op. cit., p. 119.

21. Ibid., pp. 116-17.
SHC, TT, PC, pp. 182, 201.
The Myth of the Estrangement of Earth from Heaven

After the suppression of Ch‘ih Yu’s rebellion, the Supremacy of the Universe reluctantly ordered his great grandson, Chuan Hsu,¹ to supervise the estrangement of Earth from Heaven and thus prevent further evil conspiracies between the human and the divine.² Upon this order Chuan Hsu despatched his two mighty grandsons: Ch‘ung, the God of Wood, was sent to close the spiral passageways between Earth and Heaven, and thence superintend the boundary of the First Heaven; Li was sent to block the stairways to Heaven that were provided by the divine trees in various paradises and thence superintend the great ground and be the God of the Earth.³ Thus the great rebellion resulted in the separation of the mortal from the divine and the further remoteness between Earth and Heaven.⁴
After the estrangement from Heaven, the Earth was damned with fallen gods, titans, and warriors, as well as numerous cursed animals. They occupied deserted mountains, forests and marshes to haunt nearby tribes or villages. Mankind suffered not only from mortality, but also from the miseries inflicted by these fallen creatures. To name a few: droughts were the curse of the six-legged four-winged Fei I snake; floods, the legacy of the Ling Ling Beast—a bull-body, with tiger stripes; the Fei Beast with his ox-body, white head, single eye and snake tail caused plagues; while the snake bodied (four-winged, three-legged, six-eyed) Suan Yu Bird brought famines. Tempests were the curse of Chi Meng, a dragon's head upon a human body; and finally the fallen god, Keng Fu, brought destruction wherever he visited.
The Myths of the God of Time and the Journey of the Sun

Following the Earth's estrangement from Heaven, and the appointment of Li as God of the Earth, Li descended to Earth and begot I (or I Ming), a son whom he assigned to be God of Time. I Ming dwelled on the top of the Sun-Moon Mountain in the extreme western region and guarded the sacred Wu Chi door to heaven; this was the final earthly station of the journeys of sun and moon. His other tasks included the regulation of the order and the courses of all stellar phenomena.¹

It is said that Ti Chin, a great-grandson of the Supreme Being and a brother of Chuan Hsu,² was once the Superlative God of the East.³ He had a horned bird head and the body of an orangutang with but one leg and thus leaned on a staff much of the time.⁴ Ti Chin lived in the desolate east and became friendly with the colorful phoenixes of the region.⁵ His two wives are of great importance: one, Ch'ang Hsi, gave birth to twelve moons and was named Goddess of the Moon;⁶ the other, Hsi Hê, bore ten suns and became Goddess of the Sun.⁷
Hsi Hê lived with her family in the valley T'ang, the ocean valley of boiling water which was beyond the great sea of the east. Her ten suns, in the shape of a three legged bird whose golden feathers radiated heat and light, rested on the divine giant tree Fu Sang and each was radiantly active in turn. It is said that whenever one sun returned from the firmamental journey, the sacred Jade-Cock atop Fu Sang crowed joyously. The next sun on duty would immediately bathe Valley T'ang, causing the ocean to surge and boil into the flood tide. The Golden Pheasant on top of the sacred peach tree of Hell crowed to close the gates of the Dark Kingdom, and all the earthly roosters crowed to announce the arrival of a new sun and a new day.

The Goddess of the Sun rides a brilliant chariot pulled by six winged dragons while the sun emits thousands of bright rays in every direction. As the chariot passes through the sky, it crosses several stations which indicate different periods of the day. It does not stop until reaching the Spring of Sorrow, where Hsi Hê leaves her son for the remainder of the journey and drives the chariot back to T'ang to rest before the next voyage. (Each son's departure evokes such grief in Hsi Hê that her tears form the so-called Spring of Sorrows). From the point of leavetaking the sun walks alone to the vast abyss, Yü, where he bathes to wash off the dust of the journey. This action again causes the tides to rise. Then the sun descends
slowly into Mêng, the Valley of Chaos, where he reports to
the God of Time who in turn opens the gate of Wu Chi, al­
lowing the sun's return to Heaven.14

1. SHC, TT, PC, p. 192.
   Yián, op. cit., p. 85.

2. Ibid., p. 82.
   Ibid., p. 145.
   Ibid., p. 151.
   SHC, TT, PC, pp. 177, 184, 192, 205-06.


4. Ibid., p. 142.
   Ibid., p. 145.

5. Ibid., pp. 77, 141, 143, 147.
   SHC, TT, PC, pp. 178, 181, 184.
   Cf. Yuan, op. cit., pp. 81-82.

6. Ibid., p. 142.
   SHC, TT, PC, p. 193.

7. Ibid., p. 188
   Yián, op. cit., pp. 142, 173.

8. Ibid., p. 173.
   SHC, TT, PC, pp. 45, 188.

   Adapted from CTTW, cited by Yián, ibid., p. 185.
   Adapted from HNPCSP, cited by Yián, ibid., p. 185.

10. SHC, TT, PC, p. 150.

    Adapted from SIC, cited by Yián, ibid., p. 178.


    Adapted from CITS, cited by Yián, ibid., p. 178.
    SHC, TT, PC, pp. 181, 188.

    Yián, op. cit., pp. 120, 174.
    Adapted from HNITWP, cited by Yián, ibid., p. 178.
    Also cf. Lao Kan, "The Division of Time in the Han Dynasty
Figure    Ten Suns On The Cosmic Tree

This sketch is taken from "the flying garment" found atop the innermost casket of the tomb of Lady Ch'êng, a consort of Emperor Ch'in, who reigned from 156 to 141 B.C. The sketch shows ten suns resting on the cosmic tree, Fu Sang, the mulberry tree.
xi. The Myth of Titan P'êng Tsu's Sorrow Over the Ephemerality of Life

A descendant of the Sovereign God of the North, Titan P'êng Tsu was unique in being born from his mother's armpit. Living longer than any earth-bound mortal, at the age of eight-hundred he was asked by King Yin's errand-girl about the meaning of long life and happiness. P'êng Tsu answered: "Life is short, and yet so full of despair, sorrow, anguish, anxiety, worry, departure and death. It is fleeting and I am afraid I shall die soon. I cannot teach you the way of long-life. Forgive me, but now I must leave". With a profound sigh, he paced into the wilderness. It is said that P'êng Tsu had been playing tricks with Death and had always been travelling a lonely westwards journey to evade it. To the extreme of the west, beyond the Dark-River, there lies the Great Crescent of Sinking Sand, bounding the Earth from divine Heaven. West of it stand Mount K'un Lun, the abode of perfect blessedness on earth, with a spiral road to divinity and various kinds of ambrosias; and Mount Ch'ang Liu and Mount Yü, abodes of Yuan Shen and Ju Shou—the God of Completion who supervises the round sun-down, and the God of Perfection who superintends the golden sunset. It is said that many years later the dying titan was seen on
the western boundary of the Great Crescent of Sinking Sand, riding an old camel towards the evening horizon in search of the sunset's embrace.  

1. Yüan, op. cit., p. 87.
Adapted from SPSHP, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 90.

2. Adapted from CTTW, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 90.
Adapted from SHC, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 90.

3. Adapted from folktales in southern China.
Yüan, op. cit., p. 87.

4. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 205-06.

5. Ibid., pp. 205-06; 20 (PC).

6. Ibid., p. 75 (TT).

7. Ibid., pp. 158-60.

8. Ibid., pp. 43, 45.

Adapted from SHC, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 90.

xii. The Myth of Titan K'ua Fu: One Who Chased the Sun

The K'ua Fu Titans were offspring of the God of Soil, 1 the Assistant to the Supremacy of Heaven and Earth and Sovereign God of the Dark Kingdom of Hades. 2 The giant titans had human bodies with yellow snakes hanging from each ear and hand. 3 After the banishment they lived with their descendants in the extreme northern territory of the Earth, on the range of Mount Ch'äng Tu Tzai T'ien—the northern Pillar of Heaven. 4 Among them lived the brave and well-liked K'ua Fu. He was famous for his great ambition to catch the Sun and thus challenge time to stop. On huge legs he chased the sun to the brink of Abyss Yü, its point
of descent. Extending his hands to catch the fleeting chariot of brightness, he was overcome by thirst and bent over the Yellow and Wei Rivers to drink. Both rivers were drained in a swallow, yet his thirst was not quenched. In desperation, K'ua Fu interrupted his chase to head for the Great Marshes, thousands of square miles of water in the northwest. Unfortunately, he died of thirst before reaching the water's edge. As his gargantuan body crashed to the ground, the earth trembled, thundering the echo of his grief. His staff changed into a vast peach forest.

1. SHC, TT, PC, p. 145.
2. Ibid., p. 209. 
   Yüan, op. cit., pp. 119-20.  
   Adapted from CTCH, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 111.  
   Adapted from CTCH, cited by Yüan, Ibid., p. 125.  
   Cf. LTTW, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 139.  
3. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 145, 199.  
4. Ibid., p. 199.  
5. Ibid., pp. 145, 199. 
   Adapted from CTLS, cited by Yüan, op. cit., p. 125.  
   Yüan, ibid., p. 120.  
6. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 101, 145. 
   Yüan, op. cit., p. 125. 

xiii. The Myth of Hou I: One Who Shot Down Nine Suns

It is said that, despite the regulative repetition of their celestial journey and the restrictive order of their duties, the ten suns once rushed out of the Valley T'ang without their mother's escort and romped over the firmament in defiance of the goddess's warnings and commands. The
Figure: The Archer-God Shooting The Ten Suns

This sketch of a funerary sculpture from a Han tomb of 147 A.D. shows Archer-God Hou I shooting down the solar birds on or around the cosmic tree, Fu Sang. (The sketch is taken from E. Chavannes, Mission Archeologique dans la Chine Septentrionale, pl. li; cited by Olov R. T. Janes, Archaeological Research in Indo-China, V. 11, 1951, p. 47.)
deliberate order of time disintegrated, the tremendous heat and light of ten suns caused a severe drought, and giant monsters fled the burning forests and marshes to trample upon the good Earth. The human race suffered terribly and the Great King Yao appealed to the Supremacy of Heaven for deliverance. In answer the Supreme Being sent his sacred white bow and red arrows to Hou I, the greatest archer in Heaven, with instructions that he superintend the ten suns back to their dutiful regulation of time. But when Hou I saw the great devastation on Earth his sympathies lay with humanity and in a great rage, he killed nine of the suns and slightly wounded the last, which fled back to its usual post. Then the mighty Archer-God slew seven of the largest and most dangerous monsters and presented the gigantic swine in sacrifice to the Supreme Being. Yet the Supremacy of Heaven was not pleased and the Archer-God and his wife, Ch'ang O (a fairy goddess) were deprived of their divinity and banished from Heaven. They descended to Earth and later became a beloved king and queen among men.

1. Yuan, op. cit., p. 174. Adapted from CTCH, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 177.
3. Ibid., p. 177. Adapted from CTSKC, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 179. Adapted from HFTSL, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 179. Adapted from HNTHWP, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 179.
Yuan, op. cit., p. 177.  
Adapted from CTTW, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 179.

5. Adapted from HNTICSP, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 185.  
Adapted from HNITCP, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 185.  
Adapted from CTTW, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 185.  
Yuan, ibid., p. 180.

6. Ibid., pp. 180-83.  
Adapted from CTTW, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 186.  
Adapted from HNITCP, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 185.

Adapted from HNTLMP, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 184.  
Adapted from CTLS, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 186.  
Cf. Yuan, ibid., p. 184.

xiv. The Myth of the Flight to the Moon

Following her banishment to Earth, Ch'ang O (a fairy sister of the Goddess of the Moon)\(^1\) became deeply nostalgic for the immortality of Heaven and dreaded the dark kingdom of Death.\(^2\) So great was her grief that King Hou I decided to make a pilgrimage to Mount K'un Lun to plead with a Supernal Mother of the Gods, Hsi Wang Mu, for the pill of immortality.\(^3\) With his semi-divine powers and heroic perseverance, King Hou I overcame the great obstacles along the way, finally passing even the Mount of Fire, the Abyss of Sinking Water, and the guards of sacred animals and mighty gods in each circle.\(^4\) At the Lake of Purity he paid homage to the Supernal Goddess and pleaded his case. Touched by his great strength of will, Hsi Wang Mu generously gave him two of the immortal pills; one pill provides immortality, but two promises divinity.\(^5\) Upon Hou I's return, Ch'ang O
was overjoyed at the shared prospect of immortality but her desire for divinity and reconciliation with Heaven proved too strong. She betrayed her husband and swallowed both pills, whereupon she regained divinity but also was immediately transported to the moon. Ch’ang O was so ashamed of her disloyalty that she bade farewell to the Earth and fled silently to the Palace of the Moon, where there was but one sacred rabbit noisily grinding capsules and ointments in eternal penance for neglect of duty on earth, and a lesser god, Wu Kang, hewing the sacred Laurel tree which immediately healed itself after each chop, he performed this endless toil of punishment for misbehavior on the Earth below. In the Palace of the Moon, Ch’ang O lived her divine immortality with some regret.

NOTE:

Hsi Wang Mu, the Supernal Goddess, dwelled in several places: Mount Jade (west of Mount K’un Lun), the Lake of Purity in the fourth circle of K’un Lun, and the Valley Meng, the valley of Chaos in the western extreme. She had extremely long hair, tiger fangs, and a panther’s tail. Hsi Wang Mu preferred to live among the animals and was constantly attended by three huge birds-of-prey. Respected as one of the Supernal Mothers of Gods in Heaven, she was also the Goddess of Plague and Punishment. In addition she was in charge of the divine trees of life and immortality in the Hanging Gardens. These trees bore fruit
every thousand years, and the fruits were guarded by Li Chu. The Supernal Goddess collected the fruit as the source of the ambrosial pills of immortality. 13

2. Ibid., p. 195.
3. Ibid., p. 195.
4. Ibid., p. 197.
   SHC, TT, PC, pp. 159, 194.
5. Ibid., pp. 160; 76 (TT).
   Yüan, op. cit., pp. 197, 200.
   Adapted from HNTLMP, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 200.
   Adapted from HNTLMP, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 200.
   Cf. Yüan, ibid., p. 200.
   Adapted from HNTLMP, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 200.
8. SHC, TT, PC, p. 42.
   Yüan, op. cit., p. 197.
   Adapted from MTTC, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 200.
10. Ibid., p. 196.
    SHC, TT, PC, pp. 163, 44, 163, 191.
11. Ibid., p. 42.
    Yüan, op. cit., p. 196.
12. Ibid., pp. 196-97.
13. Ibid., p. 196.

xv. The Myth of the Divine Administration

Huang Ti, the omnipotent Supreme Being, the Supremacy of
Figure  The Flight To The Moon

This sketch is taken from "the flying garment" found atop the innermost casket of the tomb of Lady Ch'êng, a consort of Emperor Ch'in , who reigned from 156 to 141 B.C. The picture shows Goddess Ch'ang O fleeting to the moon on a dragon's wings, after swallowed the elixir of immortality.
the Universe, had four faces which enabled him to see in the four directions, all dimensions, all spirits, and all beings. In supervision, he dwells in the centre and is the Sovereign God of the Centre, the fifth direction. His sacred animal is a yellow dragon, and his assistant is Hou T'u, the God of the Earth.

Hou T'u, the son of Kung Kung, is called Chü Lung, the horned dragon, and has a bull's body with a three-eyed tiger's head and two dragon horns. A cord or rope-rule regulates the four directions of the universe. He is also the Sovereign God of the Unseen World, the Hades, the dark kingdom of spirits and souls. Besides Huang Ti, there are four sovereign gods in four directions helping the Supreme Being to supervise the entire universe. The various functions and meanings of these quadrants are best summarized in the following chart.

The Sovereign God of the East is T'ai Hao, the God of the Virtue of Wood. He has a dragon body and his sacred animal is a green dragon.

Assisting the Sovereign God of the East is Chü Mang, the God of Wood and the God of Life. Chü Mang is one of the two sons of the Sovereign God of the West and is also called Ch'ung, the mighty god who once executed the estrangement of Earth from Heaven and thence superintends the first circle of Heaven. He has a square face and a bird's body. In assistance, he rides on two dragons.
and holds a pair of compasses to regulate the course of the spring. He is thus the God of the Spring.  

The Sovereign God of the South is Yen Ti, the God of the Virtue of Fire. He is also a great Sun-God and the God of Agriculture. He has an ox body and his sacred animal is a red sparrow. Assistant to the Sovereign God of the South is Chu Jung, the God of Fire and the God of Growth. Chu Jung is a great great-grandson of Yen Ti. He has a beast’s body. In assistance, he rides on two dragons and holds a yoke or a beam to regulate the course of the summer. He is thus the God of the Summer.

The Sovereign God of the West is Shao Hao, the God of the Virtue of Gold. He is also known as Pai Ti, the mighty God of the White Star (or the Golden Star), and is sometimes called Chin T’ien, the Golden Sky. He has a falcon’s body and his sacred animal is a white tiger. He also dwells on the top of Mount Ch’ang Liu to supervise the profoundly round sun-down and is thus called Yüan Shén, the God of Completion and Profundity. Assistant to the Sovereign God of the West is Ju Shou, the God of Gold and the God of Punishment. Ju Shou, the second son of Shao Hao, has a tiger’s body with white hair and with snakes hanging from each ear. In assistance, he rides on two dragons and holds a square to regulate the course of the autumn. He is thus the God of the Autumn. He also dwells on the top of Mount Yü to superintend the sunset and is thus called Hung Kuang, the red light.
The Sovereign God of the North is Chuan Hsü, the God of the Virtue of Water. Chuan Hsü, the mighty god who once supervised the estrangement of Earth from Heaven, has an unicorn's body and his sacred animal is a black tortoise. Assistant to the Sovereign God of the North is Yü Ch'iang, the God of Water, the God of the North Sea. He is also the God of the North-West Wind, given birth by the spirit of the Wind of Mount Pu Chou, the Pillar of Heaven. Yü Ch'iang sometimes is called Yüan Mêng—the origin in the occult darkness, and sometimes is called Hsüan Mêng—the latent profundity and perseverance in the occult chaos. As the God of the North Sea, or the God of Water, Yü Ch'iang has a black face and fish body; while as the God of the North-West Wind, he has a bird's body with green snakes hanging from each ear and a pair of tremendous wings which can raise a tempest of plague of death in a single stroke. In assistance, he rides on two dragons and holds a weight to regulate the course of the winter. He is thus the God of the Winter.

1. Adapted from SCLH, cited by Yüan, op. cit., p. 104. Adapted from PT, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 104. Adapted from LSCTKKP, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 104.

2. Adapted from ST, cited by Yüan, ibid., p. 110. Yüan, ibid., p. 106.


5. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 199, 209.
   Adapted from CTCH, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 125.

   Yuan, op. cit., p. 111.
   Adapted from HNTTW, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 110

   Cf. ibid., p. 11.
   Adapted from CTCH, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 111.
   SHC, TT, PC, pp. 133, 209.

   Adapted from HNTTW, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 53.


11. Adapted from HNTTW, cited by Shen, op. cit., p. 102.

12. Adapted from HNTTW, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 53.
    Shen, op. cit., p. 100.

13. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 73, 152.
    Cf. Yuan, op. cit., p. 53.
    Adapted from LCYL, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 53.
    Adapted from LSCCMCC, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 53.
    Cf. Yuan, ibid., p. 79.

14. SHC, TT, PC, p. 192.
    Adapted from KYCY, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 89.
    Yuan, ibid., pp. 84-85.
    The classic indicates that Chü Mang, the son of the Sovereign God of the West, is also called Ch'ung, who is nevertheless the grandson of the Sovereign God of the North. The information about the relationship between the Sovereign God of the West and that of the East has not yet been found.

15. Adapted from LSCCMCC, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 53.

16. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 152; 73 (TT).

17. Ibid., p. 152.
    Adapted from HNTTW, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 53.
    Shen, op. cit., p. 102.
    Yuan, op. cit., p. 106.

18. Adapted from HNTTW, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 110.
    Adapted from HNTTW, cited by Shen, op. cit., p. 102.
    Adapted from HNTSTP, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 74.
19. Adapted from PHTWH, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 74.
   Adapted from HNTSTP, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 74.

20. Adapted from TWSC, quoted by IS, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 74.


22. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 137, 210-11; 66 (TT).
   Adapted from HNTTWP, cited by Shen, op. cit., p. 102.
   Yuan, op. cit., p. 106.

23. Adapted from HNTTWP, cited by Shen, op. cit., p. 102.
   Adapted from HNTSTP, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 82.

   Adapted from HNTTWP, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 110.

25. SHC, TT, PC, p. 43.
   Yuan, op. cit., pp. 76, 82.

26. SHC, TT, PC, p. 43

27. Yuan, op. cit., pp. 77, 82.

28. Adapted from HNTTWP, cited by Shen, op. cit., p. 102.

29. SHC, TT, PC, p. 43.

30. Ibid., pp. 66, 142.

31. Ibid., p. 66.
   Adapted from KYCY, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 82.

32. Adapted from KYCY, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 82.
   Yuan, ibid., p. 78.

33. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 45, 142; 66 (TT).

34. Adapted from HNTTWP, cited by Shen, op. cit., p. 102.
   Adapted from HNTTWP, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 110.

35. SHC, TT, PC, p. 45.
   Yuan, op. cit., p. 106.

36. Adapted from HNTTWP, cited by Shen, op. cit., p. 102.
   Adapted from HNTSTP, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 89.

37. SHC, TT, PC, op. cit., p. 192.
   Adapted from SCLH, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 89.
   Adapted from KYCY, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 89.

38. Yuan, ibid., p. 83.
39. Adapted from HNTWP, cited by Shên, op. cit., p. 102.

40. Adapted from HNTWP, cited by Shên, ibid., p. 102.
   Adapted from HNTWP, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 110.

41. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 147, 180; 71 (TT).

42. Adapted from HNTTHP, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 67.
   Adapted from LSCCYSP, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 67.

43. SHC, TT, PC, p. 147.
   Adapted from HNTSTP, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 89.
   Adapted from HNTWP, cited by Yuan, ibid., p. 110.
   Adapted from HNTWP, cited by Shên, op. cit., p. 102.
   Cf. Morohashi, op. cit., I, 973; II, 130; IV, 771; VII, 765, 775; VIII, 517.

44. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 147, 180; 72 (TT).

45. SHC, TT, PC, pp. 72, 147, 180.

46. Adapted from HNTWP, cited by Shên, op. cit., p. 102.
   Adapted from HNTWP, cited by Yuan, op. cit., p. 110.
   Yuan, ibid., p. 106.
LI SAO

(ON ENCOUNTERING SORROW)

I. i. Scion of the High Lord Kao Yang,1
Po Yung was my father's name.
When She T'i pointed to the first month of the year,
On the day keng yin, I passed from the womb.

My father, seeing the aspect of my nativity,
Took omens to give me an auspicious name.
The name he gave me was True Exemplar;
The title he gave me was Divine Balance. 2

I. ii. Having from birth this inward beauty,
I added to it fair outward adornment:
I dressed in selinea and shady angelica,
And twined autumn orchids to make a garland.

Swiftly I sped, as in fearful pursuit,
Afraid Time would race on and leave me behind.
In the morning I gathered the angelica on the mountains;
In the evening I plucked the sedges of the islets.

The days and months hurried on, never delaying;
Springs and autumns sped by in endless alternation:
And I thought how the trees and flowers were fading and falling,
And feared that my Fair One's Beauty would fade too.

I. iii. 'Gather the flower of youth and cast out the impure!
'Why will you not change the error of your ways?
'I have harnessed brave coursers for you to gallop forth with:
'Come, let me go before and show you the way!' 3

I. iv. There once was a time when he spoke with me in frankness;
But then he repented and was of another mind.
I do not care, on my own count, about this divorcement,
But it grieves me to find the Fair One so inconstant.

I had tended many an acre of orchids,
And planted a hundred rods of melilotus;
I had raised sweet lichens and the cart-halting flower,
And asarums mingled with fragrant angelica,

And hoped that when leaf and stem were in fullest bloom,
When the time had come, I could reap a fine harvest.

'The three kings 1 of old were most pure and perfect:
'Then indeed fragrant flowers had their proper place.
'They brought together pepper and cinnamon;
'All the most-prized blossoms were woven in their garlands.

'Glorious and great were those two, Yao and Shun,2
'Because they had kept their feet on the right path.
'And how great was the folly of Chih and Chhou,3
'Who hastened by crooked paths, and so came to grief.

'The fools enjoy their careless pleasure,
'But their way is dark and leads to danger.
'I have no fear for the peril of my own person,
'But only lest the chariot of my lord should be dashed.

'I hurried about your chariot in attendance,
'Leading you in the tracks of the kings of old.
But the Fragrant One refused to examine my true feelings:
He lent ear, instead, to slander, and raged against me.

How well I know that loyalty brings disaster;
Yet I will endure: I cannot give it up.
I called on the ninefold heaven to be my witness,
And all for the sake of the Fair One, and no other.

Yu, T'ang, and Wu, founders of the Hsia, Shang, and Chou dynasties, or the three kings of old.
* Legendary Sage-kings.
* Last kings of the Hsia and Shang dynasties, traditionally described as monsters of iniquity.
Though famine should pinch me, it is small matter;
But I grieve that all my blossoms should waste in rank weeds.

All others press forward in greed and gluttony,
No surfeit satiating their demands:
Forgiving themselves, but harshly judging others;
Each fretting his heart away in envy and malice.

Madly they rush in the covetous chase,
But not after that which my heart sets store by.
For old age comes creeping and soon will be upon me,
And I fear I shall not leave behind an enduring name.

In the mornings I drank the dew that fell from the magnolia;
At evening ate the petals that dropped from chrysanthemums.
If only my mind can be truly beautiful,
It matters nothing that I often faint for famine.

I pulled up roots to bind the valerian
And thread the castor plant's fallen clusters with;
I trimmed sprays of cassia for plaiting melilotus,
And knotted the lithe, light trails of ivy.

I take my fashion from the men of old:
A garb unlike that which the rude world cares for:
Though it may not accord with present-day manners,
I will follow the pattern that Peng Hsien has left.

Heaving a long sigh, I brush away my tears,
Grieving for man's life, so beset with hardships.
I have always loved pretty things to bind myself about with,
And so mornings I plaited and evenings I twined.

When I had finished twining my girdle of orchids,
I plucked some angelicas to add to its beauty.
It is this that my heart takes most delight in,
And though I died nine times, I should not regret it.

What I do resent is the Fair One's waywardness:
Because he will never look to see what is in men's hearts.

All your ladies were jealous of my delicate beauty;
They chattered spitefully, saying I loved wantonness.

Truly, this generation are cunning artificers!
From square and compass they turn their eyes and change the true measurement.
They disregard the ruled line to follow their crooked fancies:
To emulate in flattery is their only rule.

But I am sick and sad at heart and stand irresolute:
I alone am at a loss in this generation.
But I would rather quickly die and meet dissolution
Before I ever would consent to ape their behaviour.

Eagles do not flock like birds of lesser species;
So it has ever been since the olden time.
How can the round and square ever fit together?
How can different ways of life ever be reconciled?

Yet humbling one's spirit and curbing one's pride,
Bearing blame humbly and enduring insults,
But keeping pure and spotless and dying in righteousness:
Such conduct was greatly prized by the wise men of old.

Repenting, therefore, that I had not coned the way more closely,
I halted, intending to turn back again—
'To turn about my chariot and retrace my road
Before I had advanced too far along the path of folly.

I walked my horses through the marsh's orchid-covered margin;
I galloped to the hill of pepper-trees and rested there.
I could not go in to him for fear of meeting trouble,
And so, retired, I would once more fashion my former raiment.

I made a coat of lotus and water-chestnut leaves,
And gathered lotus petals to make myself a skirt.
I will no longer care that no one understands me,
As long as I can keep the sweet fragrance of my mind.

High towered the lofty hat on my head;
The longest of girdles dangled from my waist.
Fragrance and richness mingled in sweet confusion.
The brightness of their lustre has remained undimmed.

1 A Shaman Ancestor, i.e. a long-dead shaman who has become a Guide to the initiate. A late tradition says that he lived in the Shung dynasty and that he drowned himself.
Suddenly I turned back and let my eyes wander.  
I resolved to go and visit all the world's quarters.  
My garland's crowded blossoms, mixed in fair confusion,  
Wafted the sweetness of their fragrance far and wide.

All men have something in their lives which gives them pleasure:  
With me the love of beauty is my constant joy.  
I could not change this, even if my body were dismembered;  
For how could dismemberment ever hurt my mind?

Then came Nü Hsi with sobbing and sighing,  
And over and over expostulated with me:  
'Kun' in his stubbornness took no thought for his life,  
'And perished, as result, upon the moor of Yu.'

'Why be so lofty, with your passion for purity?  
'Why must you alone have such delicate adornment?  
'Thorns, king-grass, curly-car hold the place of power:  
'But you must needs stand apart and not speak them fair.  
'You cannot go from door to door convincing everybody;  
'No one can say, “See, look into my mind!”  
'Others band together and like to have companions:  
'Why should you be so aloof and not take our advice?'

I look to the sages of old for inward guidance:  
So, sighing with a bursting heart, I endure these trials.
I crossed the Yuan and Hsiang and journeyed southward  
Till I came to where Ch'ung Hua was and made my plaint  
to him.

'In the Nine Variations and Nine Songs of Ch'i  
The house of Hsia made revelry and knew no restraint,  
'Taking no thought for the troubles of the morrow:  
'And so it was that Wu Kuan* made rebellion in his house.

1 Father of Yu, the Flood Hero and founder of the Hsia dynasty. Kun tried unsuccessfully to allay the flood by building dykes, and was punished by Yao for his failure. His body turned into a water-monster. The Ch'in poets show an unusual tenderness for this unpopular figure.

2 Rivers of Ch'u.

3 Name of the Sage-king Shun. Tradition says that he was buried in the far south near the source of the River Hsiang.

4 Son of Yu. He was said to have been the guest of God and to have brought back the music referred to from heaven.

5 Son of Ch'i.

6 Yi loved idle roaming and hunting to distraction,  
'And took delight in shooting at the mighty foxes.  
'But foolish dissipation has seldom a good end;  
'And Han Cho covetously took his master's wife.

'Cho's son, Chiao, put on his strong armour  
'And wreaked his wild will without any restraint.  
'The days passed in pleasure; far he forgot himself,  
'Till his head came tumbling down from his shoulders.

'Chieh of Hsia all his days was a king most unnatural,  
'And so he came finally to meet with calamity.  
'Ch'iuou cut up and salted the body of his minister;  
'And so the days were numbered of the House of Yin.*

'T'ang of Shang and Yu of Hsia were reverent and respectful;  
'The House of Chou chose the true way without error,  
'Raising up the virtuous and able men to government,  
'Following the straight line without fear or favour.

'High God in Heaven knows no partiality;  
'He looks for the virtuous and makes them his ministers.  
'For only the wise and good can ever flourish  
'If it is given them to possess the earth.

'I have looked back into the past and forward to later ages,  
'Examining the outcome of men's different designs.  
'Where is the unrighteous man who could be trusted?  
'Where is the wicked man whose service could be used?

'Though I stand at the pit's mouth and death yawns before me,  
'I still feel no regret at the course I have chosen.  
'Straightening the handle, regardless of the socket's shape:  
'For that crime the good men of old were hacked in pieces.'
Many a heavy sigh I heaved, in my despair,
Grieving that I was born in such an unlucky time.
I plucked soft lotus petals to wipe my welling tears
That fell down in rivers and wet my coat front.

I knelt on my outspread skirts and poured my plaint out,
And the righteousness within me was clearly manifest.
I yoked a team of jade dragons to a phoenix-figured car
And waited for the wind to come, to soar up on my journey.

In the morning I started on my way from Ts'ang-wu,¹
In the evening I came to the Garden of Paradise.²
I wanted to stay a while in those fairy precincts,
But the swift-moving sun was dipping to the west.

I ordered Hsi-ho to stay the sun-steeds' gallop,
To stand over Yen-tzü mountain and not go in.
Long, long had been my road and far, far was the journey;
I would go up and down to seek my heart's desire.

I watered my dragon steeds at the Pool of Heaven,³
And tied the reins up to the Fu-sang tree.⁴
I broke a sprig of the Jo-tree to strike the sun with;
I wanted to roam a little for enjoyment.

I sent Wang Shu ahead to ride before me;
The Wind God went behind as my outrider;
The Bird of Heaven gave notice of my comings;
And the Thunder God told me when all was not ready.

I caused my phoenixes to mount on their pinions
And fly ever onward by night and by day.
The whirlwinds gathered and came out to meet me,
Leading clouds and rainbows, to give me welcome.

In wild confusion, now joined and now parted,
Upwards and downwards rushed the glittering train.
I asked Heaven's porter to open up for me;
But he leant across Heaven's gate and eyed me churlishly.

I decided when morning came to cross the White Water,¹
And climbed the peak of Lang Feng,² and there tied up my steeds.
Then I looked about me and suddenly burst out weeping,
Because on that high hill there was no fair lady.

I thought to amuse myself here, in the House of Spring,
To seek out the dwelling-place of the lady Fu-fei.⁴
I took off my belt as a pledge of my suit to her,
And ordered Chien Hsiu to be the go-between.

Many were the hurried meetings and partings with her;
All wills and caprices, she was hard to woo.
In the evenings she went to lodge at the Chi'ung-shih Mountain;
In the mornings she washed her hair in the Wei-p' an stream.

¹ Name of the region where Ch'ung Hua (Shun) was buried.
² Hsuan Yu, the 'Hanging Garden'; in the Magic Mountain of K'un-lun, which is God's seat on earth and the doorway into heaven.
³ Charioteer of the sun, generally represented as female.
⁴ Mountain of the far west where the sun goes beneath the earth.
⁵ One of the rivers, each of a different colour, which flows out of K'un-lun.
⁶ A part of K'un-lun.
⁷ God of clouds and rain.
⁸ nymph of the River Lo.
⁹ Meaning 'Lame Beauty', a 'k'ung' for the patroness of marriages.
¹⁰ Home of Yi the Great Archer, one of whose exploits was the shooting of Ho Po, god of the Yellow River. The River Lo is one of his tributaries, so presumably Fu-fei was his wife and fell to Yi as conqueror's spoils.
'As long as your soul within is beautiful,  
What need have you of a matchmaker?  
Yieh' laboured as a builder, pounding earth at Fu Yen,  
Yet Wu Ting employed him without a second thought.  

'Lu Wang wielded the butcher's knife at Chao Ko,  
But King Wen met him and raised him up on high.  
'Ning Chi' sang as he fed his ox at evening;  
'Duke Huan of Ch'i heard him and took him as his minister.  

'Gather the flower of youth before it is too late,  
While the fair season is still not yet over,  
'Beware lest the shrike sound his note before the equinox,  
'Causing all the flowers to lose their fine fragrance.'

II.viii.  
How splendid the glitter of my jasper girdle!  
But the crowd make a dark screen, masking its beauty.  
And I fear that my enemies, who never can be trusted,  
Will break it out of spiteful jealousy.  

The age is disordered in a tumult of changing:  
How can I tarry much longer among them?  
Orchid and iris have lost all their fragrance;  
Flag and melilotus have changed into straw.  

Why have all the fragrant flowers of days gone by  
Now all transformed themselves into worthless mugwort?  
What other reason can there be for this  
But that they all have no more care for beauty?  

I thought that Orchid was one to be trusted,  
But he proved a sham bent only on pleasing his masters.  
He overcame his goodness and conformed to evil counsels:  
He no more deserves to rank with fragrant flowers.  

Pepper is all wagging tongue and lives only for slander;  
And even stinking Dogwood seeks to fill a perfume bag.  
Since they only seek advancement and labour for position,  
What fragrance have they deserving our respect?  
Since, then, the world's way is to drift the way the tide runs,  
Who can stay the same and not change with all the rest?  
Seeing the behaviour of Orchid and Pepper flower,  
What can be expected from cart-halt and selinca?  
They have cast off their beauty and come to this:  
Only my garland is left to treasure.  
Its penetrating perfume does not easily desert it,  
And even to this day its fragrance has not faded.  
I will follow my natural bent and please myself;  
I will go off wandering to look for a lady.  
While my adornment is in its pristine beauty  
I will travel all around looking both high and low.

Since Ling Fen had given me a favourable oracle,  
I reckoned a lucky day to start my journey on.  
I broke a branch of jasper to take for my meat,  
And ground fine jasper meal for my journey's provisions.  
'Harness winged dragons to be my coursers;  
'Let my chariot be of fine work of jade and ivory!  
How can I live with men whose hearts are strangers to me?  
'I am going a far journey to be away from them.'

II.ix.  
I took the way that led towards the K'un-lun mountain:  
A long, long road with many a turning in it.  
The cloud-embroidered banner flapped its great shade above us;  
And the jingling jade yoke-bells tinkled merrily.  
I set off at morning from the Ford of Heaven;  
At evening I came to the world's western end.  
Phoenixes followed me, bearing up my pennants,  
Soaring high aloft with majestic wing-beats.  
'See, I have come to the desert of Sinking Sands!'  
Warily I drove along the banks of the Red Water;  

1 i.e. Fu Yueh. The Shang king Wu Ting saw him in a dream and had his picture drawn so that he could be looked for throughout his realm. He was found working as a builder at Fu Yen and was at once made the king's chief minister. 'Pounding earth' because anciently walls were made by ramming earth between wooden shutters.  
2 Famous minister of King Wen, father of King Wu who overthrew the last Shang king and established the Chou dynasty. Before employment by King Wen he worked as a butcher.  
3 Merchant who became a leading minister of Duke Huan of Ch'i (reg. 658-643 B.C.), the first of the Five Great Hegemons.
With proud disdain she guarded her beauty, 
Passing each day in idle, wanton pleasures. 
Though fair she may be, she lacks all secmliness: 
Come! I' ll have none of her; let us search elsewhere!

II.iv. 
I looked all around over the earth's four quarters, 
Circling the heavens till at last I alighted; 
I gazed on a jade tower's glittering splendour 
And spied the lovely daughter of the Lord of Sung.

I sent off the magpie to pay my court to her, 
But the magpie told me that my suit had gone amiss. 
The magpie flew off with noisy chattering: 
I hate him for an idle, knavish fellow.

My mind was irresolute and havering; 
I wanted to go, and yet I could not. 
Already the phoenix had taken his present, 
And I feared that Kao Hsin would get there before me.

II.v. 
I wanted to go far away, but had nowhere to go to; 
I longed for a little sport and amusement: 
And I thought that before they were wedded to Shao K'ang, 
I would stay with the Lord of Yu's two princesses.

But my pleader was weak and my matchmaker stupid, 
And I feared that this suit, too, would not be successful: 
For the world is impure and envious of the able, 
And eager to hide men's good and make much of their ill.

Deep in the palace, unapproachable, 
The wise king slumbers and will not be awakened; 
And the thoughts in my breast must all go unuttered. 
How can I bear to endure this for ever?

1 i.e. Chien Ti, ancestress of the House of Shang. She was shut up in a tower, like Danae. Ti K'u, First Ancestor of the Shang people, sent her a swallow, and she became pregnant by swallowing its egg. Here the swallow has become a feng-huang (‘phoenix’). The poet naturally chooses a bird as messenger in presenting himself as Ti K'u's rival for the lady's hand.

2 Ti K'u's title.

3 Ti K'u's title.

II.vi. 
I searched for the holy plant and twigs of bamboo, 
And ordered Ling Fen to make divination for me.
He said, 'Beauty is always bound to find its mate. 
'Who that was truly fair was ever without lovers?'

'Think of the vastness of the wide world: 
'Here is not the only place where you can find your lady. 
'Go farther afield', he said, 'and do not be faint-hearted. 
'What woman seeking handsome mate could ever refuse you? 
'What place on earth does not boast some fragrant flower? 
'Why should you always cleave to your own home?'
The world is blinded with its own folly: 
How can you show men the virtue inside you?

Most people's likenings and loathings are quite separate: 
Only these men differ in this respect. 
For they wear mugwort and cram their waistbands with it; 
While the lovely valley orchids they say are not fit to wear.

Since beauty of flower and of shrub escapes them, 
What chance has a rarest jewel of gaining recognition? 
They gather up muck to stuff their perfume-bags with; 
But the pepper-shrub they say has got no fragrance.

II.vii. 
I wanted to follow Ling Fen's auspicious oracle, 
But I faltered and could not make my mind up. 
I heard that Wu Hsien was descending in the evening, 
So I lay in wait with offerings of peppered rice-balls.

The spirits came like a dense cloud descending, 
And the host of Chiu I mountain came crowding to meet him. 
His godhead was manifested by a blaze of radiance, 
And he addressed me in these auspicious words:

'To and fro in the earth you must everywhere wander, 
'Seeking for one whose thoughts are of your own measure. 
'T'ang and Yu sought sincerely for the right helpers; 
'So I Yin and Kao Yao worked well with their princes.

1 Ling Fen is presumably the same person as Wu Fen, one of the Ten Shamans (tsu, ling) who were said to live on a holy mountain in the west. Twigs or stalks of different lengths were used in one of the two principal methods of divination. 
2 Chief of the Shaman Ancestors. He is referred to in an ancient document as the 'great and glorious god Wu Hsien'. Spirits—as Odysseus discovered—are obliged to talk if you feed them. 
3 I Yin and Kao Yao were ministers of T'ang and Yu, first kings of the Shang and Hsia dynasties.
Then, beckoning the water-dragons to make a bridge for me,
I summoned the God of the West to take me over.

Long was the road that lay ahead and full of difficulties;
I sent word to my other chariots to take a short route and wait.
The road wound leftwards round the Pu Chou Mountain;
I marked out the Western Sea as our meeting-place.

There I marshalled my thousand chariots,
And jade hub to jade hub we galloped on abreast.
My eight dragon-steeds flew on with writhing undulations;
My cloud-embroidered banners flapped on the wind.

I tried to curb my mounting will and slacken the swift pace;
But the spirits soared high up, far into the distance.
We played the Nine Songs1 and danced the Nine Shao dances;
I wanted to snatch some time for pleasure and amusement.

But when I had ascended the splendour of the heavens,
I suddenly caught a glimpse below of my old home.
The groom's heart was heavy and the horses for longing
Arched their heads back and refused to go on.

II.x. ENVOI

Enough! There are no true men in the state: no one to understand me.
Why should I cleave to the city of my birth?
Since none is worthy to work with in making good government,
I will go and join P'eng Hsien in the place where he abides.

1 The north-west pillar of heaven against which Kung Kung butted his head in the
theomachia which tilted the earth downwards in the south-east. It is also the gate
of the underworld.
2 Not the Nine Songs of Ch'u Tz'u, but those of Ch'i. The Nine Shao
were danced to these songs.

With only a few variations, the translation is
mainly adopted from Ch'u Tz'u, The Songs of the
South, by David Hawkes. Boston, Beacon Press,
1962.
The Return

I was poor, and what I got from farming was not enough to support my family. The house was full of children, the rice-jar was empty, and I could not see any way to supply the necessities of life. Friends and relatives kept urging me to become a magistrate, and I had at last come to think I should do it, but there was no way for me to get such a position. At the time I happened to have business abroad and made a good impression on the grandees as a conciliatory and humane sort of person. Because of my poverty an uncle offered me a job in a small town, but the region was still unquiet and I trembled at the thought of going away from home. However, P'eng-tse was only thirty miles from my native place, and the yield of the fields assigned the magistrate was sufficient to keep me in wine, so I applied for the office. Before many days had passed, I longed to give it up and go back home. Why, you may ask. Because my instinct is all for freedom, and will not brook discipline or restraint. Hunger and cold may be sharp, but this going against myself really sickens me. Whenever I have been involved in official life I was mortgaging myself to my mouth and belly, and the realization of this greatly upset me. I was deeply ashamed that I had so compromised my principles, but I was still going to wait out the year, after which I might pack up my clothes and slip away at night. Then my sister who had married into the Ch'eng family died in Wu-ch'ang, and my only desire was to go there as quickly as possible. I gave up my office and left of my own accord. From mid-autumn to winter I was altogether some eighty days in office, when events made it possible for me to do what I wished. I have entitled my piece 'The Return'; my preface is dated the eleventh moon of the year i-ssu (405).

I.i. To get out of this and go back home! My fields and garden will be overgrown with weeds— I must go back. It was my own doing that made my mind my body's slave Why should I go on in melancholy and lonely grief?

I.ii. I realize that there's no remedying the past But I know that there's hope in the future.

II. i. After all I have not gone far on the wrong road And I am aware that what I do today is right, yesterday wrong. My boat rocks in the gentle breeze Flap, flap, the wind blows my gown; I ask a passerby about the road ahead, Grudging the dimness of the light at dawn. Then I catch sight of my cottage— Filled with joy I run.

II. ii. The servant boy comes to welcome me My little son waits at the door. The three paths are almost obliterated But pines and chrysanthemums are still here. Leading the children by the hand I enter my house Where there is a bottle filled with wine. I draw the bottle to me and pour myself a cup; Seeing the trees in the courtyard brings joy to my face. I lean on the south window and let my pride expand, I consider how easy it is to be content with a little space.

II. iii. Every day I stroll in the garden for pleasure, There is a gate there, but it is always shut. Cane in hand I walk and rest Occasionally raising my head to gaze into the distance. The clouds aimlessly rise from the peaks, The birds, weary of flying, know it is time to come home. As the sun's rays grow dim and disappear from view I walk around a lonely pine tree, stroking it.

Back home again! May my friendships be broken off and my wanderings come to an end. The world and I shall have nothing more to do with one another. If I were again to go abroad, what should I seek? Here I enjoy honest conversation with my family And take pleasure in books and either to dispel my worries.

II. iv. The farmers tell me that now spring is here There will be work to do in the west fields.
Sometimes I call for a covered cart
Sometimes I row a lonely boat
Following a deep gully through the still water
Or crossing the hill on a rugged path.
The trees put forth luxuriant foliage,
The spring begins to flow in a trickle.
I admire the seasonability of nature
And am moved to think that my life will come to its close.

II. v. It is all over—
So little time are we granted human form in the world!
Let us then follow the inclinations of the heart:
Where would we go that we are so agitated?
I have no desire for riches
And no expectation of Heaven.
Rather on some fine morning to walk alone
Now planting my staff to take up a hoe,
Or climbing the east hill and whistling long
Or composing verses beside the clear stream:
So I manage to accept my lot until the ultimate homecoming.
Rejoicing in Heaven's command, what is there to doubt?

With only a variation on stanza-numbering, the translation is adopted from The Poetry Of T'ao Ch'ien, by James Robert Hightower, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.
I. i. 
let's return!
garden and field will turn
to weas
why not return?

I. ii. 
I was the one who forced mind
to serve the body
so
why despair?
why sorrow alone?

aware the past was ill-advised
the future can be pursued
truly
those erring ways 'till now
they're not irrevocable
now right
in the past I was wrong

II. i. 
the boat
rocking rocking
lightly sails forth
the breeze
wafting whirling
blows about my clothes

I ask a traveller the way ahead
and grow anxious
with dim rays of
daybreak
then
looking up
home!

II. ii. 
sudden delight
a sudden rush forward
servants welcoming me
children at the gate
waiting

II. iii. 
the garden becomes a delight
though there's a gate
it's usually closed

a daily walk
with a staff to prop up my age
I stroll
and rest
now and then glancing up
looking afar

clouds
carefree
leave the mountain peaks

birds
weary from flight
know to return home

while the sun
fading dimming
soon will set
I fondle a lone pine
and linger on
now I am home!
wanting no tie with society
only to cease wandering
the world and I
mutually parted

then
why go out?
what would I look for?
my delights
lucid chats with close friends
late and books
to ease melancholy

II.iv.
villagers announce the coming of spring
work waits in the western fields

perhaps I order a canopied carriage
perhaps row a lone boat
not only exploring valleys
in their beautiful depths
but crossing hills
on switchback trails

II.v.

trees joyously emerge
into bloom

springs bubble and begin
to flow

admiring nature’s myriad creations
flourishing in season
sensing my life
of movement
has come
to rest

II.v.

it’s over!
how much longer a sojourn
on this earth?
why not set my heart
at rest?

whether at some time
I come
or go
why now this hustle and bustle?
where do I want to go?

wealth and honor
are not my desire
paradise
can’t be expected

cherishing a good morning for
going out
alone
maybe I lay aside my staff
and weed the field
ascend the east slope
stretch and sigh
arrive at a crystal stream
and extemporize in song
riding with the course of change
reaching my end

delighting in heaven’s will
what have I to fear?

With only a variation on stanza-numbering, the translation is
adopted from “Poetry as Contemplation: T’ao Ch’ien’s Homing and
William Wordsworth’s Tintern Abby,”
by Lucian Miller, in the Journal of the Institute of Chinese Studies
of the University of Hong Kong.
VII

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